Sulfur 33

INTO THE PAST

GUEST EDITOR: ELIOT WEINBERGER

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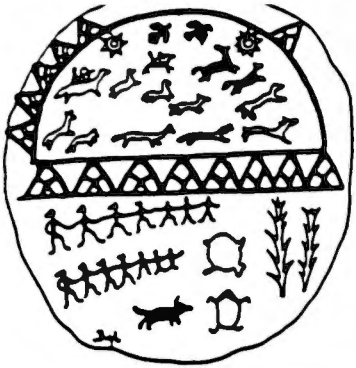

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Editor	CLAYTON ESHLEMAN
Contributing Editors	RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS MICHAEL PALMER ELIOT WEINBERGER PAMELA WYE
Correspondents	CHARLES BERNSTEIN JAMES CLIFFORD CLARK COOLIDGE MARJORIE PERLOFF JED RASULA JEROME ROTHENBERG MARJORIE WELISH
Managing Editor	CARYL ESHLEMAN
Editorial Assistant	DAVID BARR

Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan

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EDITOR'S **NOTE**

The idea for this issue was simple enough: For most of this century, poets everywhere have been engaged in recovering and reinvigorating the past. A tradition in which to insert oneself, a tradition to rebel against, a tradition of rebellion, today's news from the perennial heterodoxy. Because of their work, literary history—and the supposedly immutable "canon" of recent debate—bears little resemblance to that of a hundred, even fifty years ago.

Lately, however, this continuing invention, preoccupation, seems to have dropped out, except among a certain few writers. In the poetry magazines, especially, the early Modernists have become the totemic ancestors—behind them: a great abyss. And rebellion without tradition, rebellion against one's contemporaries, can only produce a sterile avant-gardism, without the net of correspondences that the modernists wove and severed, without the wisdom of daily conversations with the dead.

For this issue, then, poets were asked to contribute work on, out of, into the past. The "past" was, for simplicity, defined as "before 1900," and there were no other criteria. The result—these essays, histories, poems, translations and conversations; this unlikely conference of Greek misanthropes, American presidents, Ch'an monks, Khmer kings, Polynesian lepers, Japanese princesses, glassblowers and amulet makers, utopians and erotomanes—does not pretend to any larger coherence. For this is, after all, not an anthology but a magazine: disparate elements, collectively messy, assembled according to one editor's particular tastes at one particular moment, and intended to be read in any order.

A few regrets: Nearly everything here was directly solicited. I was disheartened—though perhaps I proved my point—not to hear much from younger writers, or those unknown to me, despite an "open call" in an earlier issue. As it was, more than half of those I asked—including, surprisingly, many women—had nothing to send, or didn't respond. I was hoping for work coming out of the Arabic, or sub-Saharan Africa, or the pre-Columbian Americas. Remarkably, only one poet included responded to my request for anthologies of, or excerpts from, little-known texts in English.

But the magazine is, I think, full of extraordinary works, and artifacts from the tombs. And I'm particularly grateful to the many contributors who wrote, translated, or edited pieces especially for this issue. Thanks, too, to Clayton Eshleman for giving me this space to fool around in. I'll try not to do it again.

This is the second of two special numbers. With the next issue, *Sulfur* reverts to its usual format—including the "Reviews & Noticings" section and hot new work.

—Eliot Weinberger

LARRY **EIGNER**

The hours, keepers of Heaven

time is lost
as they move around and
die, the lunges gods
shout wounds Love, Ares, almost his end
spent "and night come down"
pine-trees, the hungry mountain
field of a hill

cities like any other
the homes you drive in o weakened ghosts
the airs have no blood, restless, like yourselves

infinite
bones, street by a wall

once they've sailed another
place valuable
kinds ships breathe
bottomless piles while on the destructive
tides

and over where the sky closes in
the light of Dawn from the sea

approach the altars of god
alive with the mounting cloud
and the damp, smell, the heart blood

the idea of
a palace
under the lagoon

and slow motion
that means more
time

only the grey sea

we must talk
if we see the thing

death we have made

or the long run is never finished
hands
of that holy height

a certain number of minutes

some brought him back alive

GUSTAF **SOBIN**

The Green Tears of St. Tratian

per far veyre

Situated at the base of a cliff, St. Tratian is the place name, *le lieu-dit*, of an area terraced in orchards, vineyards and, occasionally, long rectangles of ground, gone fallow. On a particular rectangle, on a dry summer day, one can find—by simply scuffing the earth with the edge of a sandal—any number of small, green, tear-shaped beads. They're drops, droplets, really: the debris of a small, medieval glassworks. I'd come upon this area as, indeed, one comes upon most things, quite by accident. It covers no more than thirty or forty square meters of uncultivated soil, and constitutes—I'd come to learn*—a traditional element in any historic glassworks: that area in which waste was disposed of.

Still, one can easily enough imagine those drops—those green tears, as I like to call them—dripping, centuries earlier, off the white-hot nozzles of blowing-irons. As a poet, glass—I must admit—has always fascinated me. Indeed, I find the process of glassblowing remarkably similar to that of composing poetry. For in each, one brings totally disparate substances together, be they the sand and flux of the parison or the scattered instances of the poem. Then, by an abrupt increase in temperature, be it caloric or intellectual, those substances are brought to fusion. To inseparability: And, in so doing, they undergo a transformation, moving from their original, opaque state to one of pure transparency. Going, that is, from darkness to light. Then, too, in both glassmaking and poetry, the human breath—inextricably involved—finds its exhalation, at the end of the process, thoroughly englobed.

Among the droplets, I'd also managed to find a few, splintered bits of finished glass. From these I could fairly well assume that the glassworks were medieval, even early medieval, belonging to that span of indeterminate history we so aptly call the Dark Ages. For the few, splintered bits are

*I feel especially grateful to Danièle Foy for her superb study, *LE VERRE MÉDIÉVAL et son artisanat en France méditerranéenne*, and to Dominique Carru, Director of Archeological Excavations for the Department of the Vaucluse.

thin as tissue, as broken shell: an unmistakable indication of their period. Then, too, the fact that the glassworks were located at the base of a cliff—I'd discover—was perfectly characteristic of those times. For a cliff provided four advantages. First and foremost, its flanks must have abounded in holm oak and aleppo pine: with the indispensable firewood, that is, for the ovens. Concurrently, it kept the glassmakers from encroaching on cultivated, or cultivatable, ground. Thirdly, the cut wood could be slid down the slope, rather than being dragged up from under. And lastly, cliffs provided ready-made abutting walls for provisional shelter. For glassworks of this sort were temporary. They lasted exactly as long as the surrounding firewood, or—what usually amounted to the same thing—as long as the terms of a contract, allowing for the exploitation of that wood, stipulated. The workers, upon arrival, would construct little hovels for themselves *in situ*, adding three stone walls to the natural fourth, then cover those rudimentary structures with long branches. The branches would then be bound in puddled clay.

And St. Tratian? How long had it survived as a glassworks? Judging by the expanse of the waste deposits I'd come upon, no more than two, perhaps three years. For deposits five times this size, I'd read, belonging to *verrerie* of that very period, had operated in a single location for exactly five times as long. My assumption here, needless to say, is nothing more than that: a calculated guess in the face of so much obscurity.

Aside from wood fuel for the ovens and the abundantly available clay for the crucibles, silica—accounting for at least 60% of the glass's composition—must have come from the sand banks of a nearby river, the Coulon. On the other hand, flux—the alkaline base which turns glass into a vitreous paste and allows for its malleability—must have been imported from a considerable distance. A swamp plant called marsh-samphire or saltwort or—by extension—glasswort, had been cultivated in the Rhone estuary from, probably, the early Middle Ages on. A halophyte growing in salt-water marshes, the plant itself is rich in sodium. Flowering in winter, ripening in summer, marsh-samphire, once harvested, was left to ferment—somewhat like lavender—in tall stacks. At the given moment, it was distilled in small, underground kilns, lined at the base in clay and covered, at the top, by a whole network—a mesh, really—of turtle shells. Just enough space was left between these shells to serve as flues, points of exhaust. Once cooled, the ash of this plant—carefully screened—was processed into hard, white balls, fit for transportation. From there—from the Rhone estuary, that is, to St. Tratian—is no less, I calculated, than a hundred kilometers distance.

And so, I came to discover, water was part of the process. For the sodium contained in that plant is essentially marine. Add to this, earth in the form of silicates, fire in the white heat of the ovens, and air, of course,

blown in sharp blasts down the full length of the blowing irons, and one has the four elements reunited: reunited, that is, for the sake of crafting the most ephemeral, perhaps, of all human products: glassware.

None of my own reading or rudimentary field research, however, helped me to understand who, exactly, they were, these itinerant glassmakers. Nor what kind of life they really led, moving as they did from site to site, hovel to hovel, exhausting the surrounding wood fuel as they went, and leaving little more than these droplets—these transparent, green tears—as mementos. For scarcely anything else remains today. I'd searched for an oven: for traces, that is, of some provisional, make-shift furnace. During the early medieval, these rural hearths, it seems, were comprised of little more than two rows of massive stones laid upright over bedrock, then capped with flat, overlapping slabs. The ensemble was then caked in layer after layer of refractory clay. Inside, the walls of the hearth widened somewhat into a womb-like chamber, while remaining open, at either end, like a wind-tunnel: to the north (the wind dominant side) for stoking fire, and to the south, for removing ash. But no, nothing. Hard as I looked, not a single trace of an oven at St. Tratian remained.

Curiously enough, it's the dead, lying in their sepulchers in yet other archeological sites, who have preserved the few pieces of glassware we have from this period. Traditionally buried with a goblet to the right of their heads and tilted in the direction of their mouths (or, in the case of ecclesiastics, held flush against their chests) they've lain there—the guardians of that fragile ware—gradually decomposing as the glass itself, bit by bit, has turned iridescent. Aside from the dead, however, and so much dry, notarial documentation, we know next to nothing. True, there's a few, Romanesque frescoes in the area belonging to a somewhat later period, depicting glassware in scenes such as those of the Last Supper. But of them? Of those? Of the glassblowers that moved, itinerant, through the Dark Ages of so-called historical time, even the specialists—the medievalists—can do little more than speculate.

One is left, in fact, with a period of time—over a thousand years—that has gone, for the most part, unrecorded. It left so little to record. This is true not only in terms of its glassware, but in terms of nearly every other manifestation of human activity. Living as I do in the heart of Provence, I find myself continuously confronted with this apparent lacuna in history. This lapsus in its unraveling. This hole in its very fabric. As an example, I take to market, each week, a small, humpbacked, stone bridge, built in the time of Augustus. Aside from so many drystone huts (called *bories*, in the region), there is nothing—architecturally nothing—between this stout little bridge, built in 23 BC, and the very first smattering—blossoming—of Romanesque chapels in the Twelfth Century. Everything else has been

razed, over and over, by successive invasions. Or, constructed in wood, has long since decomposed. Nothing whatsoever remains.

One wonders, living in a time such as ours, whether a similar period couldn't recur. Whether, indeed, in its own, surreptitious way, it hasn't already begun. Of course, our own Dark Age, were it to develop, would be luminous. Luminous with neon, cathode-ray, with the green screens of countless monitors, functioning autonomously in some post-linguistic semiotics, determining—unequivocally—every aspect of our lives, shaping not only our decisions but our very choices. Yes, a dark, an incandescent dark, that would have no further need of those very creatures—ourselves—who'd first wired its circuits, and set its screens aglow. Aren't we already entering this age, this shadow, the edge of this terrestrial eclipse? Aren't there signs, sufficient enough? And, not the least of them, the steady, ineluctable breakdown in literacy as we move from the verbal to the visual. From an articulated culture to one, electronically programmed. From a consciousness rooted in speech to so many neurons, reacting to optical stimuli. To life, in short, as video game.

As if foreshadowing that age, there are movements today (growing in both number and influence) that would break language down into so many strict, literal units. That would make of literality a *diktat.* As if to prepare us for that ultimate codification. Post-Marxist, post-Modernist, post-humanist, they'd gladly ban—if they could—metaphor from accepted usage. "Green tears," for instance, is metaphor. It's drawn, like all figures of speech, from a free play of the imagination, and motivated by the need to weave—reconcile—the disparate parts of one's experience into a common fabric: a fabric by which societies, throughout time, have traditionally come to recognize themselves. Themselves and—within the enlarged field thus created—the world around them. By association, resemblance, correspondence (in the Baudelairean sense) to bind—rather than isolate—their lives. To create—against the irrefutable, totalitarian fact—the common chords of what was once called a common culture.

Tears, green tears. They'd left us that much, hadn't they? They, who'd blown—out of molten parisons—those globes, those viscous bubbles no thicker than their breath. Had blown them into the air of those Dark Ages, yes, they'd left us that. The scattered debris of their vanished world.

As for ourselves, as we lose control, or—what amounts to exactly the same thing—*gain* control over our own ecosystem, it's hard to think that the future, if future there is, won't depend on how we read—interpret—the debris, the scattered debris of those vanished worlds. Of a millennium, for instance, that left us—at least at St. Tratian—with little or nothing if not its tears. Its green tears. The long, pendulous waste of its green, calcinated tears.

JACQUES **ROUBAUD**

Troubadour Amors

(Tr. by Richard Sieburth)

—*Springtime.* The moment natural to love. Sweet and mild. *«lo dous termini suau»* [the sweet suave season] (Jaufre Rudel). Bright. *«quest terminis clars e gens.»* [this season bright and noble] (Guiraut de Borneil). Fragrant. *«l'odors de l'erba floria»* [the scent of meadow in flower] (Peire Bremon le Tort). Verdure, color, leaf, flower. *«lo gens tems de Pascor. ab la frescha verdor. nos adbui folh'e flor. de diversa color.»* [lovely Eastertime with its fresh verdure brings us leaf and flower of divers colors] (Bernart de Ventadour). The waters quickened with light. *«quand lo rius de la fontana. s'esclarzis si cum far sol. e par la flors aiglentina.»* [when the stream at the fountain brightens as it arrives and the eglantine flower appears] (Jaufre Rudel). The scent of herbs. *«al prim qu-il timi sorz en sus.»* [as soon as the thyme comes to surface] (Raimbaut d'Orange). Radiances. *«e floris la mora»* [and the blackberry in flower] (Bernart Marti). The cold weather now left behind. *«la nostr'amor vai enaissi. com la brancha de l'albespi. qu'esta sobre l'abr'en creman. la nuoit ab la ploi'ez al gel. tro l'endeman que-ls sol s'espan. per la fueilla vert el ramel.»* [Our love goes thus like the hawthorn's twig which trembles on the tree at night in rain and frost till morning sun spreads through the green leaves and branches] (Guillaume IX). The sun spilling forth, flowers appearing. *«al apareysson de las flors. quan l'albre-s cargon de fuelb. e-l temps gens' ab la verdura. per l'erba que creys et nays.»* [at the apparition of the flowers when the trees load themselves with flowers and the fine weather with all that green growing and coming to life in the meadow] (Peire Rogier). The days getting longer. *«ar vey qu'en vengut ab jorns loncs»* [I see the long days are upon us] (Guillem de Cabestanh). Fruit. *«ar vey rengut en la cima. man vert madur frug pel cim.»* [I see arranged on high the green or ripe fruits of the peaks] (Raimbaut d'Orange). Everywhere *«la dols'umor de la saba»* [the sweet humor of sap] (idem.) Summer at last.

But if springtime resounds with love, love in turn is in itself such a springtime that it can make spring of any season. Of winter, for example. *«puois nostre temps comens' a brunezir. e li verjan son de lor fuelhas blos. e del solelb vei tant bayssatz los rays. per que-l jorn son escur e tenebros. et bom non au d'auzelbs ni chans ni lays. per joy d'amor nos devem*

esbaudir.» [since our weather is getting overcast and the branches are empty of their leaves and I see the sun's rays lowering as long as the days are dark and cloudy and the songs or lays of birds are not heard we should rejoice in the joy of love] (Cercamon). Light may disappear into the cold but love is always luminous. *«ara no vei luzir solelh, tan me son escurzit li rai. e ges per aisso nno-m esmai. c'una clardatz me solelha. d'amor qu'ins el cor me raya.»* [I no longer see the sun shine all its rays are dark to me but I do not despair for a brightness casts its sun on me love's rays driving into my heart] (Bernart de Ventadour). If love be strong enough, it can do away with the weather altogether: *«tant ai mo cor ple de joya. tot me desnatura. flor blancha vermelh' e groya. me par le frejura . . .tan ai al cor d'amor. de joi e de doussor. per qu-l gels me sembla for. e la neus verdura.»* [I have a heart so full of joy that to me everything changes nature a flower white vermilion and yellow seems ice-cold to me. . .I have a heart so full of love and joy and sweetness that to me the frost seems flower and the snow a bed of green] (Bernart de Ventadour). Or else the absence of spring rhymes with that wintry inner disposition which derives not from the absence of love but from the ache of love. Bitterness. *(l'aura amara* or bitter air). *«quant l'aura doussa s'amarzis. e-l fuelha chai de sul verjan. e l'auzelh chanjan lor latis. et ieu de sai sospir e chan. d'amor que-m te lassat e pres. qu'ieu anc no l'agui en poder.»* [when the sweet air turns bitter and the leaf falls from the branches and the birds change their Latin here I sigh and sing of love that keeps me bound in prison never did I have it in my power] (Cercamon.) Love is its own spring: stronger than winter, than cold, than frost, than bitterness, than falling leaves, than silence.

—*Harbingers.* Birds, above all. Their language, their "Latin" is that of love. They sing its sweetness, it suavity. The courtliness of their springtime song comes from their knowledge of love, their suffering of love. The courtliest of the birds are the nightingale and the lark. *«la lauzet' e-l rossinhol. am mais que nulh autr'auzell.»* [the nightingale and the lark love more than any other bird] (Peire Vidal). The nightingale's elation: *«lo rossignolet salvatge. ai auzit qui s'esbaudeja. per amor en son langatge. e-m fai si morir d'enveja. car lieis cui dezir. non vei. . .»* [the little nightingale in the wild I have heard his cries of joy for love in his own language and he makes me die with envy for she whom I desire I do not see. . .] (Gaucelm Faidit). The nightingale, bird that he is, takes great care with his *canso*; he is gifted with a natural *trobar* (Macabru). *«e-l rossinholetz el ram. volf e refranh ez aplana. son dous chantar et afina»* [the nightingale on the branch repeats and rephrases and rolls his sweet song and refines it] (Jaufre Rudel). He is without a doubt a master whose example is to be followed. As Peire d'Auvergne says: *«Amics Bernartz de*

Ventadorn. com vos podetz de chant sofrir. can aissi auzetz esbaudir. lo rossinholet noih e jorn. aujatz lo joi que demena. tota noih chanta sotz la flor. melhs s'enten que vos en amor»[Friend Bernart de Ventadour how can you keep from singing when you thus hear the nightingale rejoicing night and day listen to the joy that overtakes him all night he sings beneath the flower he knows more of love than you]. The lark, as Bernart de Ventadour says in his famous song ("Can vei la lauzeta mover") feels the intensity of love to the point of fainting. In Raimbaut d'Orange's *canso* "Cars douz et feinz" the initiator, the intercessor is the *bederesc*, a Beziers wren whose song provides an extremely complex lesson in form: he staggers his trills like bricks in a wall. When one is in pain, it is sheer torture to hear the happiness of birds: *«brais chans quilz critz. aug dels auzels pels plaissaditz. oc mas no los entan ni deinh. c'un'ira-m cenh. lo cor on dols m'a pres razitz. per qe-n sofer.»* [noise songs trills cries I hear the birds among the hedges but do not listen to them do not deign for I am girded with pain the ache has taken root in my heart from which I suffer] (Raimbaut d'Orange). But their joy, like that of the troubadour, has a source: the lady. *«et tant es sos cros gais. qu-il auzeill cantador. s'en alegren pels plais. e n'an gaug entre lor. e-n fan voutas et lais.»* [and her body is so gay that the singing birds rejoice in it among the hedges and take joy in it among themselves and make of it music and lays] (Gaucelm Faidit).

—*The Dona;* her beauty.

Love is for the lady. The lady is its end, its object, its reason. The lady is fair. She has *beltatz*, total beauty, body and spirit. *«blancas dens ab motz verais»* [white teeth on true words] says Arnaut de Mareuil. She is light *«car sa beautatz alugora. bel jorn et clarzis noih negra»* [for her beauty lights up a beautiful day and brightens a black night] (Bernart de Ventadour). She gives light. By her very nakedness. *«que la neus quan ilh es nuda. par vas lei brun'et escura»* [for the snow when she is naked beside her appears brown and obscure] (idem.). Brightness falls from her eyes. She is light made flesh: *«tant m'es grail' e grass'e plana. sotz la camiza ransana. quan la vei. fe qe-us dei. ges no tenc envei'al rei»* [so svelte and plump and sleek is she under her linen chemise when I see her I swear to you I have no envy of the king] (Bernart Marti). She is, says Guillaume IX, whiter than ivory. She is fresh: *«ges rams floritz. de floretas envoutas. cui fan tremblar. auzelhon ab lur becs. non es plus frecs»* [a branch aflower with burgeoning buds which tremble beneath the beaks of birds is no fresher] (Arnaut Daniel). The elements and qualities of her body's beauty call out for enumeration, and the poetic line is the unit most suited to receiving them: *«no-m meravilh si s'amors me te pres. que genser cors no crei qu'el mon se mire. bels e blancs es e frescs e gaise e les. e totz aitalos com eu volh e dezire.»*

[I am not surprised that her love so takes me I believe no fairer body can be seen in the world lovely and white it is fresh and gay and sleek exactly what I want exactly what I desire] (Bernart de Ventadour). *«molt me sap bo lo jorn qu'eu la remire. la boch' e-ls olhs e-l fron e-ls mas e-ls bratz. e l'autre cors que res no-n es a dire. que no sia belamen faissonatz»* [how I love the day when I gaze at her her mouth her eyes her forehead her hands her arms and the rest of her body where there is no correction to be made where there is nothing that is not finely fashioned] (idem.). For she is fashioned by the finest of workmen, God himself: *«anc pus N'Adam culbic del fust. lo fruig don tug em en tabust. tam bella no-n aspiret Crist. bel cos benestan car e just. blan e lis plus qu'us almatist.»* [ever since Lord Adam plucked from the tree the fruit that has troubled us all no thing this lovely has received breath from Christ lovely body agreeable precious well-proportioned whiter and more polished than an amethyst] (Guillem de Cabestanh).

—*The Dona*, again: the beauty of the lady is inevitably linked to her youthfulness, her beautiful manners, her hospitality, her learnedness, her intelligence, her "grasp" of matters of love. The combination of all these qualities, in addition to her social station (she is of noble birth, but not too noble), give her glamor or *paratge*, a word that blends outward appearance *[apparence]* and semblance *[paraître]* and kinship *[parenté]*, one of the most precious, untranslatable, irreplaceable, radiant and forgotten terms of the *trobar*. The lady is all the more worthy of being loved because she is already loved, or loved more deeply and more expertly; she is all the more loved because her *paratge* excites love and because she invites it with her eyes, with her sweet words, and because she beckons love to come to her, to sing to her in song. This is what makes her beauty, her valor so incandescent. And she thereby achieves that ultimate quality which is her *pretz* or price, the result of her own specific qualities combined with the light which love contributes to her and with the song which spreads her fame far and wide. The "price" of the lady is thus a compounding of the *pretz naturau* or natural price which inheres in her and of the value which love adds to her by means of song.

—*Amors:* at the center of everything, *amors*, love. *Amors* is a drive, a motor force of things and beings; an axiom, a primary principle. Love is a lord, but he is also a *dona* because he is linguistically feminine in gender; a bizarre androgynous god, he escapes personification and allegory; he is not really a character, but remains a concept that may or may not be invoked; "the proper name of a thing" (Gertrude Stein). He has his powers, his kindness, his purity; he is *fin'amors* (love as fine as gold): *«bon'amors ha un uzatge. co-l bos aus quan ben es fis. que s'esmera de bontatge. qui*

ab bontat li servis.» [good love has the same manners as good gold when it is pure he refines himself with kindness when treated kindly] (Peire d'Auvergne). He has his violence. He has his evil double, *fals'amors*. *Fals'amors* betrays, degrades, leads to falsity, to unbridled desires. He spreads *«com la belluja en la suja»* [like a spark in soot]; he causes love to become *«torta e brecha»* [twisted and cracked]—and *«lai on non pot modre lecha. plus aspramens no fai chatz»* [where he cannot bite he laps more greedy than a cat] (Macabru).

Given what *amors* is the axiom and evidence of, it so happens that the troubadours have no explicit theory of love; they do not say what it is but simply that it is (or, at the very most, in the case of *fals'amors*, what it should not become). The troubadours are no "explainoids" (as Gorky said of the Bolsheviks). They are also far removed from the Italians of the *dolce stil novo* (who are also obsessed with "doctrine" and "explanation"). This is one of the reasons for the relative failure of the various attempts to elucidate troubadour poetry or to establish the origin and significance of "courtly love." The various theses advanced—be they liturgical, folkloric, Arabic, sociological—only manage to cast indirect light on troubadour love; they cannot fathom the fact that it is an unmotivated affirmation of self in song. By the same token, the thesis concerning the "circulation of song," according to which song only sings of itself, is doubly blind, for it does not factor in "love for language" nor does it account for the fact that love does indeed have an existence or an evidence that is external to song and without which song could not take place.

Amors, both lord and lady, seizes the troubadour and transforms him into an *amaire* or *amador* or lover; it is for this reason that he chooses a lady, the vision of whom will be his initial weapon of conquest. *«amors o fai si com lo bons astors. que per talan no-s mou ni no-s debat. anzeis esta entro c'om la gitat. et adoncs pren son ausel quan l'a sors. e fin'amors esgarda e aten. una domna ab entieira beutat. on tuit li ben del mon son asemblat. e no-i faill ges amors quan tal la pren.»* [love behaves like the lovely falcon who by desire does not move or struggle but remains still until released and then takes the bird that is beneath and gazes at pure love and observes a woman of utter beauty where all the riches of the world are gathered and love does not err that takes her as such] (Rigaut de Barbézieux). For the troubadour, if he is to belong to love and thus be capable of song, must love a lady; love makes him sing, love makes him love, but he is not in love with love: what he loves is the lady whom love has chosen to be loved by him. It is in this fashion that the troubadour becomes an *amador*.

—*Cor:* love is housed in the heart. Love takes possession of the heart. The heart is prisoner of love. *«amors l'enclav'e l'escrinha e-l pres dinz son*

escrinh» [love enfolds and embeds it and keeps it shut in its little casket] (Raimbaut d'Orange) The heart is saturated with love. *«l'amors qu'inz el cor mi plou»* [love that rains into my heart] (Arnaut Daniel). *«per tot lo cor m'intra l'amors. si cum fai l'aigu'en l'espoigna»* [love seeps into my heart like water into a sponge] (Peirol). Without the taste of love in one's heart one is no more than a dead man. *«ben es mortz qui d'amor no sen. al cor cal que dousa sabor.»* [quite dead is he who does not sense something of love's sweet savor in his heart] (Bernart de Ventadour). Love directs the heart lovewards. So seized is the heart that its only desire is to speak its love *«ades vol de l'aondansa. del cor la boca parlar»* [now the mouth wishes to speak of the abundance of the heart] (Aimeric de Perguilhan). To speak, to sing—but of what, if not of the beauty of the lady whom love has inscribed in the heart. *«e port el cor on que m'estei. sa beutat e sa fachura.»* [I carry within my heart wherever I am her beauty and her appearance] (Bernart de Ventadour). Love seeds the heart: *«amors qu'es frugtz de la vera semensa»* [love which is the fruit of true seed] (Aimeric de Peguilhan).

—The *glance.* The sight of the lady, her glance, guide love toward the heart. The light of love so illuminates the lady that she casts this light back, in turn illuminating the heart with love. *«aissi cum selh que bad'al veiral. que-l sembla bells contra la resplandor. quant ieu l'esgar n'ai al cor tel doussor. qu'eu m'en oblit per lieis que vei aital.»* [thus like someone contemplating a glass that seems utterly resplendent to him when I look upon her I have such sweetness in my heart that I forget myself for her whom I thus see] (Peire Vidal). The eyes receive love from the very vision of the lady. *«quar li huelh son drogoman del core e l'huelh van vezer. so qu'el cor platz retener. e qun ben son acordan. e ferm tuit trei d'un semblan. adoncs pren veray'amors nasquenza. d'aisso que l'huelh fan al cor agradar. qu'estiers no pot nayssar ni comensar. mas per lo grat dels tres nays e comensa.»* [for the eyes are interpreters of the heart and the eyes go look for what it will please the heart to retain and when they are well-agreed and certain all three in one shared view then true love takes birth from what the eyes induce the heart to approve otherwise it can not be born or begin but by the agreement of the three is born and begins] (Aimeric de Peguilhan). But it is above all the glance cast by the lady that carries love (invisible yet material) through the air, a glance that is interpreted by the eyes for the heart that is to receive it. *«ab un dous esgartz coraus. que an fag lur via. per mos oillz ses retornar. el cor on los teing tan car.»* [through sweet glances of the heart that have taken their path through my eyes without return to my heart that holds them so dear] (Rigaut de Barbézieux). The image of love that is thus carried by the glance penetrates via the eyes into the heart where it remains; it is possible to rediscover it there, in her absence, when repeating one's love song. *«mas*

sui tant enveios. de lei vezer cui dezire. qu'inz en mon co la remire. e vei sas bellas faichos. per cho m'auci deziran. quant la remir en pessan. c'ades la cuich vezer nuda. enaissi come l'ai veguda» [but I am in such need of seeing her that I desire to gaze on her within my heart and see her lovely features there so I die of desire when I gaze on her in my thoughts for I think I am seeing her naked again the way I once saw her] (idem.). The finest image conserved in the heart is that of the lady naked.

—*Amar*: to be the one who loves, *amaire*, the lover. He who loves loves absolutely. He who loves believes absolutely; he has total trust, even despite the evidence. *«bos drutz non deu creir auctors. ni so que veiran sey huelh. ne neguna forfaitura. don sap que sa dona-l trays.»* [a good lover should believe no witness not even that which his eyes may see when it comes to the slightest treachery by which he knows his lady deceives him] (Peire Rogier). The complete trust which Peire Rogier here evinces may be a bit excessive. When one is in love everything is love. *«amors mi te jauzen e deleitos. amors mi ten en son douz recaliu. amors mi ten gallart et esforciu. per amor sui pessius e cossiros. per amor sui tan fort enamoratz. que d'amor son totas mas voluntatz. per amor am cortezi'e joven. quar d'amor son mei fag e mei parven.»* [love keeps me joyous and delighted love keeps me in its sweet embers love keeps me bold and pugnacious love makes me pensive and full of cares if I am head over heels it is because of love if I desire it is because of love if I love courtesy and youthfulness it is because of love all my acts all my conduct come from love] (Peire Vidal). Love is a durable possession for the lover, a state which theoretically never ends. *«amoros sui et amoros serai. e conos-c ben que per amor morrai. e ges per tan d'amor no-m posc partir. si ben conosc mon viure e mon morir»* [A lover I am and a lover I shall be and I clearly know that love will be the death of me and yet I cannot leave this love though I clearly know it is my very life and death] (Raimon Jordan).

—*Dezir*: that which returns, via love, from the heart to the lady. The lover desires. He wants to see, to see her naked, to touch her, to fold her in his embrace. He wants to be received by her at nightfall, when she is about to go to bed, when she sheds her garments. *«amors e que-m farrai. . .ara cuit qu'e-n morrai. del dezirer que-m ve. si-lh bela lai on jai. no m'aizis pres de se. qu'eu la manei e bai. et estrenha vas me. sos cors blanc gras e le.»* [love and what shall I do. . .I think I'll die of this desire that seizes me if the lovely lady in her bed does not receive me by her side if I do not stroke and kiss her and gather against me her body white and plump and sleek] (Bernart de Ventadour). *«soau e gent me conquis. can volv c'ieu vis. son bell cor blanc gioios giaser. don ben me vegna. e no*

cresatz qe ieu partis. . .can vi so qu'ieu plus volc veser»[suave and noble she conquered me when she desired me to see her lovely white body lying there in delight whence such good things came to me and do not think I ran the other way. . .seeing what it was I most wanted to see] (Gaucelm Faidit). If the lady's gaze has inscribed love within the heart, it also reflects it in the lover's eyes which desire vision, that is, desire to see the lady unveiled at night when her beauty, being the sole source of illumination, will grant even greater power to the "seignury" of love. *«ben aurai dompna grand honor. si ja de vos m'en jutgada. honranssa que essotz cobertor. vos tenga nud'embrassada.»* [lady it will be a great honor if you accord me the honor under the covers of holding you all naked and kissed] (Raimbaut d'Orange). The lady may even voluntarily offer herself up to her lover's eyes or kisses. *«q'enqer sent la doussas sabors. qe de greu malananssa-m sors. qan li baisiei doussamen. son bel blanc cor covinen. ab honrat. dous comjat. privadamen. adoncs frais. los doutz bais. mon marrimen.»* [I still feel the sweet taste that takes me out of my great pain when I sweetly kissed her lovely body white and well-made with her honored sweet permission in private thus is allayed by this sweet kiss my sorrow] (Gaucelm Faidit). If she had been sound asleep, the kiss would have been even sweeter. *«be la volgra sola trobar. que dormiso-n fezes semblan. per qu'e-lh embles un doutz baisar. pus no vuelh tan qu'eu lo-lh deman.»*[how I would love to come upon her alone she would be asleep or pretend to be and I would steal a sweet kiss since she does not want me to ask for it] (Bernart de Ventadour). The typical locus of desire is the room (including rooms made of leaves in springtime) and the garden. Desire transforms rooms into palaces, just as it always strains toward something "more," something imagined, something dreamt, or even impossible: *jauzimen* or *jauzir*[joy or sexual *jouissance]*. The attaining of *jauzimen*, which is the ultimate goal of *dezir*, presupposes reciprocity, something at once given and received. Which is what Jaufre Rudel says: *«las pimpas sian als pastors. et als enfans burdens petitz. e mias sion tals amors. don ieu sia jauzens jauzitz.»* [let us leave the piping to the shepherds and to mischievous children and let my love be such that the joy I give I receive]. But desire, whether because it is unattainable or because it is by its very nature violent, forever tends to overstep the bounds that the lady and love and the troubadour himself have imposed on it: *«e baizera-lh la bocha en totz sens. si que d'un mes i peregra lo sens.»* [and I kissed her mouth every which way so much so that the traces will appear there for a month] (Bernart de Ventadour).

—*Joi:* a state of harmony, ecstasy, and inner perfection which is given by love (when the lady so wishes). It is something far more intense than its later lexical dilution into "joy." It gives color to song, it lights up the world

to the eyes of the troubadour, it changes and improves everything: *«tant ai mo cor ple de joya. tot me desnatura»* [my heart is so full of joy that everything changes nature]. Joy can appear to be a quality of the lady, a substance that is physical (even if invisible) and that she transmits by according her love: *«per son joi pot malaus sanar. e per sa ira sas morir. e savis hom enfolezir. e belhs hom sa beutat mudar. e-l plus cortes vilaneiar. e-l totz vilas encortezir»* [with her joy she can heal with her anger she can kill a wise man can go mad a handsome man can lose his looks the courtliest of men can become common and the perfect commoner become courtly] (Guillaume IX). Joy is a truly magical substance that is said to "refresh the heart" and "renew the flesh." The lady who possesses such joy in her and who chooses to make a gift of it can parcel it out into any number of joys large or small, and each of these joys will enable one to get more or less close to ultimate *joi*. When the lady gives entirely of her body and of her love, this occasions major or everlasting joy *(joi major, joi perpetual)*. It is not surprising that "major joy" should inspire the excellence of song; nor is it surprising that it should be so rare and that Guillem de Saint-Didier, for example, speaks of only knowing it in his dreams. For Guillaume IX, *joi* is scattered throughout the world and when love is requited, the lovers receive this joy as their reward: *«totz lo joi del mon est nostre. dompna s'amdui nos amam»* [all the joy of the world is ours lady if we both love each other). For Bernart de Ventadour, the joy manifested and inspired by birds and flowers cannot measure up to the major joy that can only come from the lady. Guillem Ademar speaks of *joi* as the clothing he would wear if only his lady would agree to be naked for him: *«mas tant mi ten de joi nut. sill que-m don Dieus tener nuda»* [but I am kept so denuded of joy by her whom God has given me to hold naked]. Joy Is thus inseparable from the lady; her joy excludes all other joy; ever since he been blessed with total joy *(joi entier)* by his lady, Raimbaut d'Orange says has not been curious about anybody else *(«d'autre enquisitaire»)*. If the joy accorded by the lady is the first joy one has ever undergone, it will by the same token by the last joy one will ever experience in one's life. Or at least so Bernart de Ventadour claims.

The origin of the word *joi* is uncertain; the best etymology that has been proposed, the one that the best covers the unexpected reach of its various echoes, belongs to Charles Camproux who has suggested that it is a portmanteau word comprised of joy *[joie]* and play *[jeu]*.

—*Sofrirs:* rage and pain *(«ira e dolors»)*, suffering and sorrow *(marrimen)*. The reverse of joy; and inevitable. The deprival of joy, the "slowness of joy," the refusal of joy, the workings of the enemies of love, the regretting of lost joy, loving from afar *(l'amor de lonh)*, doubt, anxiety, the sense of emptiness *(niens)*—these are some of the circumstances and causes of the

suffering inseparable from joy. The purest and most primary kind of pain derives from unrequited desire: *«lo tems vai e ven e vire. per jorns per mes e per ans. et eu las no-n sai que dire. c'ades es us mos talans. ades es us e no-s muda. c'una-n volh e-n ai volguda. don anc non aic jauzimen.»* [time comes and goes and veers through days through months through years and I alas know not what to say my desire is always the same it is the same and does not change there is someone I want and have always wanted but I have never had joy from her] (Bernart de Ventadour). This suffering puts one in the presence of .nothingness: *«a totz jorns m'es pres enaissi. c'anc d'aquo c'amiei no-m jauzi. . .fauc maintas res que-l cor me di. tot es niens»* [every day the same thing comes to pass what I have loved has never given me joy. . .many things I do of which my heart says to me all is nothingness] (Guillaume IX). Suffering becomes obsessive: *«no posc sofrir c'a la dolor. de la den la lenga no vir.»* [one cannot keep the tongue from returning to the tooth that aches] (Giraut de Borneil). There is only one thing that makes the suffering bearable: that it be accompanied by joy, that *joi* and *dolors* somehow alternate, and that end of suffering somehow multiply the joy of *joi: «cen vetz mor lo jorn de dolor. e reviu de joi autras cen.»* [a hundred times a day I die of pain and come alive with joy a hundred times again] (Bernart de Ventadour). The idea that suffering is the necessary condition for joy, or that it is an illness that can be cured by joy, leads *sofrirs* to acquire a positive value. As Jaufre Rudel says: *«que pus es ponhens qu'espina. la dolors que abjoi sana.»* [more poignant than a thorn is the pain one heals with joy]. In any event, pain and love are inextricably wed; the example of Tristan and Isolde is enough to convince anybody of this: *«plus trac pena d'amor. de Tristan l'amador. que-n sofrir manhta dolor. per Iseut la blonda.»* [I suffer more deeply from love than Tristan the lover who suffered so much for the blonde Isolde] (Bernart de Ventadour).

—*Mezura:* in order to master desire, in order to keep its violence, its lovely "folly" from spilling over into recklessness, jealousy, or extreme possessiveness, in order to maintain not merely the equilibrium but rather the transcended tension between joy and suffering, timidity and audacity, hope and despair, the troubadours invented the concept of *mezura* or measure. There is no other term in the vocabulary of courtly song that has become as worn out, as enfeebled, as bland, as denatured as *mezura.* It has become (as it had already become for some of the later troubadours) a term used in the language of "good" education, a term designating a tendency to compromise, to moral tepidity, a synonym for the "golden mean" or the middle of the road. The sense of this term as used in *canso* is far stronger, far sharper. *Mezura* is the troubadour's (and the lady's) sole bulwark against the anarchy of Eros, against the destructive inclinations of *amors* which is expressed by the figure of *melancholy Eros*, that fatal

passion which forever threatens the lovers and which can easily cause them to fall into madness or death. It is not insignificant that "measure" should also be a concept central to the medieval theory of rhythm, music, and verse—meter being that which transforms into "song" the chaotic drive of language to articulate love.

Macabru magnificently situated *mezura* at the core of the love's greatest contradiction: joy vs. suffering. The properties of lovers, he observes, are *«jois sofris e mesura»* [joy suffering and measure]. Elsewhere he notes that *«mesura es de gen parlar. e cortesia es d'amar»* [measure is to discourse what courtliness is to love]. For Bernart Marti, love is a necessity and as such conforms to measure *(«amar dei. que ben es mezura»)*. The opposite of *mezura* is *demezura*, unmeasure or lack of measure, which is as loathsome as *mezura* is desirable. He is mad he who lacks measure *(«mas es fols qu-s desmezura»)*. He who does not observe measure is committing a fault against his lady and against love: *«e saic que fauc falhensa. cat non am per mezura.»* (Bernart de Ventadour). Which is why the lady, according to Aimeric de Belenoi, removes her hand from her glove and forces the lock of the heart open in order to place *mezura*, the guardian of love, there *(«que quan trays la man de son guan. frays de-l cor la serradura. e-i mes per guardar mezura»)*. Excessive desire, uncontrolled love are the companions of unmeasure: *«era-m combat sobrevolers. e sobramars e loncs dezirs.»* [now I struggle with excessive wants and excessive love and protracted desires] (Giraut de Borneil). Even the lady can be guilty of unmeasure, should she refuse her lover with excessive cruelty. But Peire Rogier is prepared to accept even this from her: *«qu'amors vol tal amadors. que sapchon sufrir erguelh. en patz e gran desmezura.»* [love demands such lovers as know how to suffer her pride in peace and great unmeasure]. On the other hand, the troubadours are clearly aware that it is neither possible nor desirable to maintain "measure" as a way of eliminating the madness, the non-sense at the core of all love. Aimeric de Belenoi boasts that he loves his lady *«d'un douz dezir plen de desmezura»* [with a sweet desire full of unmeasure]. The great lovers of the past were never so lukewarm as to be blind to this force that drives one beyond acceptable bounds. Guillem Ademar claims that he loves with less measure than Paris ever loved Helen *(«qu-us am plus senes mezura. que no fetz Paris Elena»)*. And Gaucelm Faidit observes that the straight path of love leads inevitably to the measureless realm of excessive desire *(«de fin amor sai segre-l drech viatge. si que tan am mi donz outra mesura»)*. If love itself cannot be entirely faulted for encouraging the excessive pursuit of its gratifications, there is cause enough for such desire in the lady's body itself—so fresh, so pure: *«quar m'es del corten pres. sai be que desmezur. mas son cors fresc e pur. fora dregz qu'an blasmes»* [prisoner of my heart I know well that I lack measure but her body fresh and pure should

rightfully take the blame] (Aimeric de Peguilhan). For it is perhaps the lady herself, her beauty, who lacks measure: *«mout es bell'outra mesura. genta fresca blanc'e lena. cill qe-m ten en sa cadena»* [she is beautiful beyond measure so fresh and white and smooth who keeps me on her chain] (Guillem Ademar). In short, even if "measure" is a property and a duty of love, *amors* nonetheless implies (and desires) its opposite; which is normal, since measure and unmeasure struggle against each other, mingle with each other, and inspire each other just like joy and sorrow, sense and madness. Aimeric de Peguilhan: *«mas anc no vi fin'amansa. ses alqes de follejar. ni joy d'amor ses pezar.»* [pure love has never been seen without a touch of madness nor joy of love without pain]. Bernart de Ventadour: *«e s'eu en amor mespren. tort a qui colpa m'en fai. car qui en amar quer sen. cel non a sens ni mezura»* [and if in love I make mistakes he is wrong who would reproach me for he who seeks a sense to love himself lacks sense and measure].

—*Servir*: the troubadour approaches love as if approaching a lord; and the lady who bodies forth this love, who bears this love in her gaze, in her kiss, in her nakedness, who commands the coveted fiefdom of joy, is the very incarnation of this seignury; which is why the lover addresses the lady like a suzerain. To serve the lady is to observe all the standard conventions of feudal service; and all this is summed up by the strange title by which the lady is designated, namely *midons*, which may be roughly translated as "my lady lord" (the feminine adjective with masculine noun is evident in the Portuguese *mia senhor* which is used by the Gallician disciples of the troubadours; the gender of the Occitan term is more veiled, more hidden). The double-naturedness and the double-genderedness (morphologically and linguistically) of the term *midons* is explicitly thrown into relief by a line of Raimbaut d'Orange's that plays on the colors of its vowels: *«de midons fatz dompn'e seignor»* [of *midons* I make my lady and my lord]. At the outset of his "doctrinal" *canso*, Guiraut de Calanson thus addresses the obligatory lady: *«celeis cui am de cor e de saber. domn'e seignor et amic volrai dir»* [to her whom I love heart and mind my lady my lord my friend I should say]. This is not the place to examine the various attempts to explain this obviously quite paradoxical aspect of courtly love. No single sociological, psychoanalytical or formalist interpretation has, to my mind, been able to come to terms with the word *midons* and all of its implications.

The troubadour offers to serve, to be a vassal; he asks of the lady that she receive him and recognize him as such: *«bona domna re no-us deman. mas que-m prendatz par servidor. qu'e-us servirai com bo senhor. cossi que del gazardo m'an.»* [good lady I ask nothing of you but that you take me as your servant I will serve you as a good lord no matter what the reward] (Bernart de Ventour). Guillaume IX "renders himself over" to his

lady; "retained" by her, he is bound to her by oath, a bond that will never be dissolved, and he submits to her by offering his feudal obeisance. As he is about to leave this world (at least in song), this is one of the things he regrets the most: *«mais non serai obediens»* [I shall no more be the servant of love]. The troubadour who serves Is a "liege man," someone who has sworn fealty and obedience. Occasionally the lover provides a physical image of his submission: *«domna-l genzer c'anc nasques. e la melher qu'eu anc vis. mas jonchas estau aclis. a genolhos et en pes. el vostre franc senhoratge»* [lady the most noble ever born and the best I have ever seen hands joined I bow to you whether on my knees or on my feet in your frank domination] (Bernart de Ventadour). What the troubadour expects in return is the lady's protection and some sort of reward for his services *(guerredon);* he also hopes for *joi,* which the lady can parcel out like a piece of land—that minuscule territory of joy, at once her greatest power and the greatest benefit that the lover awaits from his suzerain, his lady. This fantasy of feudal fealty is often inextricably bound up with desire. Thus Bernart de Ventadour (again) imagines himself at the bedside of his lady: *«pres de leih josta l'esponda. e-lh traga-l sotlars be chaussans. a genolhs et humilians. si-lh platz que so pes me tenda.»* [near to her at her bedside I will pull off her snug shoes on my knees in utter humility if it so pleases her to stretch out her foot to me]. The lady is a lord and her worldly possessions, her castles, are her beauty, her value, her "price." She is more lordly than any other lady; she lives in a tower taller than anybody else's. Given this exclusive and absolute state of feudal dependence, it follows that the relation of troubadour to lady is founded on inequality (except for the fact that both serve that higher and more universal lord who is *amors).* Aimeric de Sarlat sums the situation up succinctly: *«sieus sui non es ill mia»* [I am hers she is not mine]. If the troubadour happens to be a lord himself, he places his possessions in the hands of the lady; he "holds" them through her: *«qu'ab lei de cui taing Aurenga. no-m aian tan mei prec valgut. qu'ab si m'a baisan retengut»* [near to her through whom I hold Orange my prayers only served to be detained by a kiss] (Raimbaut d'Orange). But the prime possession that the troubadour most frequently offers up to the suzerainty of the lady is his loving heart: *«lo cor en tenh en loc d'altre rictatz. e mes chansos en loc de vassalhatge»* [instead of other riches I have my heart and my songs instead of vassalage] (Giraut de Borneil). If the troubadour is the lady's vassal, he is thereby ennobled by this position; just as a knight glories in his king's power, so the troubadour basks in his lady's radiance. But the attraction of humility and submission can become so "unmeasured" that he will be tempted to represent himself as even more humble, even more lowly at the feet of the tower of his "lady lord," *sidons.* Raimbaut d'Orange is not merely satisfied to submit his fiefs to her authority; he imagines himself to be a serf confronting his master. With a cord around

his neck, Giraut de Borneil "gives" himself, "offers himself up" to his lady. Vassal or serf, he who serves chooses to be in total thrall in order to be irreproachable in the eyes of his lady lord: *«nulhs hom non es tan fizels vas senhor. qu'ieu non sia plus fizels vas amor. non solamen en chanso ni en rima. mas en totz faitz»* [no man is as faithful to his lord as I am faithful to love not only in my songs or rhymes but in every action] (Almeric de Peguilhan).

—*Merce:* the mercy or pity that love places in the lady's heart and that has its source in love's charity. It is through mercy that the lady will overcome her cruelty, her coldness, her disdain, her hesitations, her anxieties, her trepidations concerning the enemies of love, their surveillance of her, the jealousy of her husband, etc.—and it is mercy that will eventually lead her to realize that she could (or should) reward the faithfulness of her servant given that the songs he has composed for her will spread her "price" among the knights and ladies of all the "good countries" of the world. If mercy does not intervene, all desire, all hope is vain, and death is near, that symbolic death of the *trobar* which is an "exile" or a flight *«no sai on»* [I know not where] in which one disappears into the nothingness of the *faidit*, the man who has been driven out of his country. If the lady's heart has not been softened by *merce*, love will swing over into this void *(niens)* or no-thing *(non re)*, this "I know not what" *(«no sai que s'es»)* that is always attendant upon doubt and delay. The appeal to mercy is a way of exorcizing despair. The lover clamors for mercy. I am, says Aimeric de Perguilhan, your man crying mercy mercy mercy *(«clamans merce merce merce»)*; he fears that he will be the victim of the lady's vacillation between *merce* and *desmerce*, mercy and unmercy, and that the very intensity of his supplication will provoke her to become pitiless. For if the lady's heart has hardened, it is very difficult for pity to soften it: *«non es tan greu ab obrar fregz aciers. com lo seus cors durs tornar plazentiers.»* [it is less difficult to work cold steel than to melt her hard heart] (Raimon Jordan). Mercy, however, is demanded of the vanquisher: *«las mas jonhtas col liguat e-l cor pres. vos clam merce bona dona plazens. c'aisi com etz bela et avinens. merce ajatz de mi c'avetz conques.»* [my hands joined my neck in chains my heart captive I clamor for mercy good lady of pleasure since you are so fair and pleasing have mercy on me whom you have conquered] (Gaucelm Faidit). The lady has triumphed over the troubadour in the war of love; he had wanted to take flight; he had tried to escape his fate; he had refused to submit; and now, roundly defeated, he is taken prisoner: *«eu que-n posc mais s'amors me pren. e las charcers en que m'a mes. no pot claus obrir mas merces.»* [what can I do If love seizes me and the prison into which he has thrown me can be opened only by mercy's key] (Bernart de Ventadour).

—*The enemies of love:* the feudal analogy, with its image of love as vassaldom, provides a framework particularly well-suited to the imagining of the various dangers that threaten the lover. If the lady is the lord of love, if the troubadour is her vassal, how can he can ever satisfy his desire for her exclusive love? Might not the lady lord have other vassals as well? Every other singer, every other troubadour is thus potentially a rival; every other individual instance of poetry is therefore suspect, for the poetic quality of some other song or the greater fame of its singer might potentially sway the lady away from the one who serves her so faithfully. Other singers threaten to sing her praises, to "reason about love" before her, to address their *cansos* to her, to take advantage of her lover's absence to defame him. Worse yet, they will bruit his love to ears that should not hear of it, they will picture his love to eyes that should not see it. The troubadour thus lives surrounded by enemies; this spawn of rivals, ever-present, Argus-eyed and honey-tongued, is called by the name *lausengiers* or "slanderers"—although the term initially referred to the action of praising. But one man's praise is another man's slander, even if the object is the same (the favor of the suzerain, of *midons).* The *mise en scène* of courtly love, with its petty ambitions and jealousies forever swirling about, with all its knights and ladies holed up in the same castle, endlessly talking about each other to each other, provides a perfect stage for the atmosphere of anxiety in which the adventure of love plays itself out. The lovers, once they have recognized each other as such, do not go off to some secret retreat to dally together; *amors* is an affair that is at once is utterly private and utterly public. The song of love must make itself heard above the din created by the hostile voices of the *lausengiers.* And the *canso* often expresses the hate that these slanderers inspire in the heart of the true lover: *«als durs crus cozens lauzengiers. enojos vilans mals parliers. dirai un vers que m'ai pensat.»* [to the hard crude caustic slanderers boring boorish foul of tongue I shall speak this poem they have brought to my mind] (Raimbaut d'Orange). According to Raimbaut, their loathsome words are like snow that can only be thawed by the sun of love; and yet, as the Countess of Die notes, even the sun can lose its radiance when surrounded by the clouds of slander. *Lausengiers* can bring about a break between the lady and her lover, they can drive out the troubadour and force him into exile. Guillem de Cabestanh says that because of them he will have to go abroad, that he cannot remain where he is because they will have killed him with their envy; they will rejoice to see him living like a savage; he will go on his way like a poor pilgrim; their dissatisfied desires will have murdered him *(«en autra terra ira penre lengaje. si que ja mai en aquesta non seia. e-l lausengier qui m'on mort par enveja. n'auran gran joi can me veran salvaje. e-m menerai com paubres peleris. e-l desirer mi auran tot aucis.»).* Raimbaut d'Orange considers the "nothingness" of the slanderer, the

torture and horror inspired by his words, to be essential components of the *trobar*, and he devotes a *cobla* of his *canso* of the inverted flower to them: *«mas una gen fad'enversa, com s'eron noirit en tertres. que-m fan pro pieigz que conglapis. q'us quecx ab sa lengua trenca. e-n parla bas et ab siscles. e no y val bastos ni giscles. ni menassas ans lur esjoys. quan fan so don hom los calm croys»* [but the species of inverted *fadas* that were raised on the hills causes me more pain than ice they murmur and whistle under their breath nothing can stop them neither sticks nor branches nor threats they take joy in acting like crows]. These nasty words, these words uttered in a malevolent whisper, are prime examples of "hirsute" words, words whose consonantal blockages, whose harsh, coarse sounds break up the harmonious continuity of the poetic line. O God, says Bernart de Ventadour, If one could only sort out the false lovers from the true, If only the slanderers and cheaters could wear a horn on their foreheads *(«ai Deus car se fosson trian. d'entels faus li fin amador. e-lh lauzenger e-lh trichador. portesson corns el fron denan»)*. The most serious malady that the slanderers can provoke is jealousy, a form of sickness that can afflict either the husband or the lover. *Lausengiers* are filled with envy and it is because of this envy and this hate which they harbor against pure love that they try to poison everything with jealousy: their goal is to make the lady jealous, the husband (if there is a husband) jealous, and the troubadour jealous. But the conditions of love are such that slander and jealousy can never be fully eliminated from the horizon of the lover and his song; for just as the troubadour is by definition the rival of every other troubadour (and thus becomes their *lausengier),* so he can never feel himself secure from doubt or jealousy—except during that rare moment of exaltation that is *joi*. The telling exterior sign imagined by Bernart de Ventadour—the horn on the forehead of the *trichador*—might on certain occasions just as well be raised on the forehead of the purest or finest of lovers. Folquet de Marseille, who was an expert at treason, expressed this possibility in a revealing line: *«qu'ieu sui tornatz de mezeis gilos»* [I have turned into someone jealous of myself].

—*Senhal:* to avoid the possibility of slander, the ideal thing would be to keep love entirely secret: *«ai Deus com bona for-amors. de dos amics s'esser pogues. que ja us d'aquestz enveyos. lor amistat no conogues.»* [O God how beautiful would the love of two friends be were it possible that one of those envious persons never knew of their friendship] (Bernart de Ventadour). Kept secret, love would tend toward silence. But given that love must speak its name in song, that the *pretz* of the lady must be spread far and wide, that the joy of love must result in melody and rhyme, there is a basic contradiction at work here which the concept and the practice of the *senhal* attempts partially to resolve. The *senhal* is the secret name

given to the lady so that she may be named in the *canso* without her actual identity being revealed. The *senhal* is one of the names of love; If masterfully chosen, it will articulate both the essence of the lady in question as well as the essence of the *canso* that celebrates her. Here are a few *senhals* to conclude this brief account of troubadour *amors:*

-Alauzeta (Skylark) Rai (Ray) Miels de Domna (Finest of Ladies) Bels Espers (Lovely Hope) Bels Cavaliers (Lovely Knight) Doussa Enemia (Sweet Enemy) Mirail de Pretz (Priceless Mirror) Noms Verais (True Name) Na Dezirada (The Desired One) Bel Carboncle (Lovely Carbuncle) Bel Diaman (Lovely Diamond) Bel Cristalh (Lovely Crystal) Bel Cors Joios (Lovely Body of Joy) Bel Cembeli (Lovely Sable) Na Dous Esgar (Lady Sweet of Glance) Na Esmai (Lady Emotion) Bona Esmenda (Fine Amends) Mon Estiu (My Summer or My Harvest) Mon Estui (My Sheath) Na Faidida (Lady in Exile) Na Flor (Lady Flower) Flor de Lis (Fleur-de-lis) Na Flor Vermelha (Rosy Flower) Gai d'Amors (Gay with Love) Na Gaug de Cor (Joy of Heart) Mon Guerrier (My Warrior) Na Jauzida (Lady Joyous) Fin Joi (Pure Joy) Mon Joi (My Joy) Joi Novel (New Joy) La Loba (She-Wolf) Mon Sobre Gaugz (My Over-Joy) Mon Ses Enjan (My Betrayless) No Conten (Not Content) Bel Papagai (Lovely Parrot) Na Bei Ris (Lovely Laughter) Bel Senhor (Lovely Lord) Ses Merce (Without Mercy) Sobre Luenh (Far Too Far) On Tot Me Platz (Where Everything Pleases Me) Tristan.

KARIN **LESSING**

Ten Sonnets by Louise Labé (c. 1525–1565)

I.

No one, though more shrewd than Ulysses,
could have foreseen that what appears so divine
and graceful, is honored and respected,
would bring me so much anguish and pain.
For you, Love, have pierced me thoroughly
with your lovely eyes and there's
no remedy—if you haven't any—
for my gorged and blazing heart.
O harsh fate, it's as if a scorpion had stung
me and I begged the same creature
for a cure. I so want to put an end
to this torment yet without extinguishing
what I hold most precious: the desire in me.
It will kill me. There's no way out.

II.

O beautiful brown eyes, O sidelong glances,
O breath of sighs, O steady flowing tears,
O black nights waited for in vain,
O shining days that in vain return.
O grieving, yearning without respite,
O squandered time nothing replaces,
O thousand nets spread for a thousand deaths,
O worse that's yet to come.

O laughter, forehead, hair, arms, hands and fingers
O plaintive lute, viola, bow, and voice:
that many torches to set fire to one woman!
And you, who are swirling all these brands,
probing and scorching me throughout,
not one spark has fallen on you.

III.

When I see your blond head crowned
with the green laurel, your lute bringing forth
such a sweet complaint that rocks & trees
would follow you, when
I see you obtain the highest honor and praise
so that everything else looks pale, then
my passionate heart says to itself:
All these qualities, talent and virtue
for which you are given love and esteem,
couldn't they, in the end, make you love in turn?
And thus add to your list of titles
that of taking pity on me, your love ever so gently
kindling on mine.

IV.

O to be ravished to that breast,
to him for whom I die—
if envy ceased, to live with him
my days' short rest—

If, in his arms, he said to me,
dearest, in one another let us be
content, assured no storms, tides,
straits, can sever us—
If, with my arms holding him tight,
like ivy encircling the tree,
envious of my joy, death came—
Kissed then, and kissing,
my life rushed out upon his lips
sweeter than life, to taste that happiness.

V.

The morning wind as it rises
to greet the sun's return, wakes
water & earth out of sleep that kept
the gentle flow from murmuring, from adorning
itself with brighter brighter flowers
the earth. Now birds
on every branch
delight.
Dance trampled grass
where the moon still cools—
O morning wind,
let me renew myself in you
entirely, return my sun,
you'll see: I too am made lovelier.

VI.

To thunder-racked, hail-
battered heights of Caucasus
fine days return,
light-suffused. . .
When Phoebus' ring is steeped into waves,
his sister shows her slanted bow. . .
Even the Parthian flees, saving his arrows,
his wrath slackened.
At one time you complained, I consoled,
that too slowly my love kindled.
But now, in your arms, and
burning as you wanted me,
you, your fire watered, are
colder than I ever was.

VII.

I shun the city, temples, all places
where I see you, where your pleading
so pleases me that you can compel me
to give you what I' ve prized most.
Masques, tournaments, games, bore me:
I can imagine nothing beautiful without you.
It's so bad I run from what I desire
—my face and thoughts turned away—
to stray alone in this thick wood.
But after wandering aimlessly, I realize
that if I want to be free from you,
I shall have to live outside of my self,
or further still,
find an abode.

VIII.

Kiss me once more, again kiss me, kiss,
never stop! Give me one more to taste,
to savor, one of your most amorous
kisses: I'll return each one with four
hot, fiery coals. Why, still not
satisfied? Here are ten, ten more
sweet kisses, thus mingling yours
with mine for greatest joy.
Two lives we'll live, now
in one's self, now in the other. . .
Let me babble on foolishly just this once,
for I'm always so ill at ease, holding back,
there's no contentment for me in life
unless, overflowing, I break free.

IX.

I was foretold that some day I would love
the one whose portrait was described
to me: when he came, at once
I recognized him. Then, when I saw
how he was driven by his fate,
I pitied him and love's blind enterprise
and so compelled myself
until I, too, loved utterly.
You'd think what heaven and fate had first
created could only thrive—
but when I see such cruel storms,
such clouds closing in, it's as if hell itself
had from the very start
wrought this shipwreck upon me.

X.

Blame not my love, Ladies, that I've felt,
touching me, a thousand torches,
a thousand labors, a thousand of pain's teeth
and that I've squandered my time crying.
No great fault tag to my name.
I yielded, the agonies are now,
don't sharpen their violent sting.
I warn you: if he finds you out,
Love can—without bringing in Vulcan's ardor
or Adonis' beauty—make you
love more, and with less cause
and stranger, wilder passion
drive you,
unhappier than I.

Louise Labé, a Postscriptum

"Lionnoize," is what she added to her name.
Works by Louize Labé
Lionnoize.

Inseparable, Louise and Lyon. Who, today, would link his or her name to place, claim such intimacy? Stand and be remembered as Parisian, New Yorker, Berliner, Calcuttan? Inseparable and yet neither in her sonnets and elegies nor in her prose does she explicitly refer to anything we connect with the Lyon of today or of the past. Lyon, the ancient capital of Gaul where the Rhône and Saône rivers meet, where mists drape the tall melancholy houses until a beginning mistral disperses them and where each one of sixty thousand hand looms is producing twenty inches of silk per day. . .

Silk. Looms and commerce. The great trade fairs have opened the doors between France and Italy: the Renaissance rushes in. Wealth and exchange: silk in exchange for books, books in silk covers?

But Louise has nothing to do with silk, not directly. What pervades her childhood and most of her adult life is coarse, smelly and altogether unsuitable for finery and ornament. Hemp is the fiber her father and, later, her husband used to make ropes, the ropes for managing sails and spars, for hauling the multitude of boats on both rivers. She owes much of her luck to all three: relative wealth to the fiber, its craft and trade and it, in turn, enabled the father to provide her with an education, the husband to offer

her ease, comfort and most precious of all, much undisturbed leisure time. Which she uses. Which she enjoins others to use.

Of how it was employed, Louise Labé offers some information herself. In the dedication of her book to Clémence de Bourges which is, at the same time, an introduction, she writes: ". . .but having spent part of my youth practising music and having found the rest too short for my mean understanding. . ." Modesty or irony. Both, for even in her lifetime, well before her works were published and later, when they had all but been forgotten, she had earned a reputation as scholar, as "femme très docte." Like Christine de Pisan before her, she devotes her time to learning, to the study and practice of music and languages, to the composition of verses in Latin and Italian in the manner of Petrarch, the poetic model of her time. (The immense popularity of Petrarch! Again, there is no equivalent today—while Louise is writing, another "Lionnais," Maurice Scève, claims to have discovered Laura's tomb in Avignon; the king himself composes an epitaph.) Petrarch and Boccaccio and Castiglione's *Courtier* and all the classics known. . .Learning and pleasure in learning. That she also excelled on horseback and participated in tournaments, a girl of fifteen, sixteen perhaps, in male dress, jousting with others her age on the occasion of a royal visit or passage through town we know from her own account in one of her elegies. An early surname, "Captain Loys" sprung from that.

Singular but not exceptional. It's the time and place that are. A brief period in the history of Western Civilization in which the revived energies of the past provide a canon and code within which a woman, and a woman of mediocre social status like Louise Labé, can desire and hope, with some confidence, to deploy her talent and gain full possession of her self; a place, Lyon, wide open to the exchange of goods and ideas, with its own constellation of male and female poets and where, from the year 1500 on, 156 print shops are turning out books by Plutarch, Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Aretino, Alberti, Ariosto, Castiglione, Clément Marot, Rabelais, Maurice Scève, Pernette du Guillet and, in 1555, Louise Labé.

Time spent. In the sense of what actually happened. The unique experience, the essential encounter that demanded to be recalled, relived and crystallized in writing and for which her sonnets especially would provide the formal solidity, the perfect sharply defined architecture.

Does it matter who it was, the handsome youth on his way to fight the wars in Italy who turned her head at sixteen and whom she most likely never saw again or, later, the poet who was to rekindle the first passionate emotion? What does matter is "Amour," the transforming experience of Love which alone could put her on equal footing with the poets of the past whom she admired most and with those of her own time who did or did not come to her house to enjoy her graceful and witty company, admire her garden and try her exquisite "confitures."

Love, then, in its aspect of a formidable, fateful force, in its wrenching physical reality, with its means and effects, its pledges and discourse, its defense, irony and conventions is the stuff, fiber and fabric of her *Elegies* and *Sonnets*. Love appears again in her only work in prose, *The Debate between Folly and Love*, but here much reduced in its claim to precedence. Not only does Love fail to convince Folly with words but also misses his shot and it is up to the gods, in a series of arguments and counter arguments which make up *The Debate* to stop their quarrel by giving Love and Folly his and her due. In what is at once a story, a comedy and a satire, Love is miniaturized, Venus' crybaby making a fuss in the Olympian playroom whom Folly puts into place by saying: ". . .my name is Folly. I am the one who makes you great and casts you down according to my pleasure."

Several years separate the poems from the prose and though Louise Labé was praised early for the quality of her prose, it's the poetry and mainly the sonnets that were remembered.

Meanwhile the legend grew. A crowd of fervent admirers and a host of enemies perpetuated it to whom she was, in turn, the "Belle Cordière" and "femme sçavante," or the courtesan, a public scandal. What else could she be? Either idealized as the Renaissance beauty and witty, entertaining scholar, or lowered, just as Folly says, to an aberration by envy, malice or, according to one of her contemporaries, because no better subject of conversation could prevent one from falling asleep while at the dinner table.

We know that she was married but how she felt about her marriage to a man twenty years older than she remains her secret. She had no children and hardly ever traveled except to her house in the country where she died, practically alone and forgotten, some time during the year 1566. A year earlier she had made her will in which she provides for her nephews, for her servants and for the poor, asking to be buried without "display or superstition, that is to say, at night, by the light of lanterns. . ."

"Estant le tems venu, Madamoiselle. . ."

Time employed. Time spent. And time regained.

Pavan.

"Now that the time has come, Mademoiselle, that the severe laws of men no longer prevent women from applying themselves to the sciences & disciplines. . ."

"And if one of us attains the degree of being able to put her ideas into writing, to do so carefully & not to disdain fame, & to adorn herself with it rather than with chains, rings and fancy dresses. . ."

"But who can keep renown?" echoes her second elegy. Something else, indifferent to the flux of celebrity is mirrored in her anagram: "Belle à Soy." Beautiful to one's self.

Fame, honor, pleasure. Pleasure in learning, pleasure in conversation, pleasure in writing. How it is to be maintained, intensified. Most precious desire. . .

"For the past gives us delight, & can be put to better use than the present; the pleasures from one's feeling pass away & never return, & sometimes memory fails most where the actions have been most enjoyed.

. . .But when we happen to put down our ideas in writing, no matter how busily our mind runs on afterwards & moves unceasingly, if after a great length of time we look at what we have written, we return to the same point and to the same disposition in which we were before. Then we are doubly content for we rediscover the pleasure we had in the past either in what we wrote about or with the present knowledge of those sciences to which we then applied ourselves. Moreover, the judgment our present ideas cast on the former gives us a singular contentment. These two gratifications that come from writing. . ."

Stately, elaborately dressed. In the dance, the figure that comes forward to meet her steps out of the past. There is wonder in their gaze, a brief questioning, then recognition. The dancers draw apart.

". . .as for myself, I was looking for nothing else but an honest way to pass the time. . . .

And because women do not readily show themselves in public alone, I have chosen you as guide. . ."

I have chosen you. . .for the past gives us delight.

". . .to incite you & to make you wish in seeing this work of mine, rough & poorly constructed, to bring into the light another that is better polished & of a superior grace. God keep you in good health. Lyon, 24 July, 1555. Your humble friend, Louize Labé."

If Clémence de Bourges, who was still very young when Louise Labé dedicated the book to her, had wanted and been able to take on the challenge, she did not have time for she died seven years later.

Eros & Poetry

He is the son of Chaos, an egg, and unwrought stone.

He is Ker, a sort of anthropomorphic bacillus with wings, but an Erote, a Ker of Life, instead of the black-winged creature Homer described with big white teeth and long, pointed nails that tore corpses to pieces and drank the blood, a cannibalistic Harpy.

He is a daimon, halfway between god or spirit-force and man.

He is the son of Eilithia or of Iris. He is the son of Hermes and Artemis, or of Hermes and Aphrodite, or of Aphrodite by Zeus, or of Ares and Aphrodite.

His insignia are the hare, the rose, the cock and the goat.

He is the youngest of the gods, or he is the oldest.

His chief antagonist is Anteros, the God of Mutual Love. His companions are Pothos (longing) and Himeros (desire).

In Alexandrian poetry, where children played an important role in magic and cult, Eros degenerates into a mischievous child playing knucklebones, a kind of dice, with Ganymede.

There is a related Greek God, Até who personifies delusion, infatuation and reckless conduct, thus mischief and evil. Hesiod has her as the daughter of Eris (strife), Homer as the daughter of Zeus, a very troublesome daughter. She is bewilderment and wild impulse. She walks lightly on the heads of mortals without them knowing it. Behind her trail the Litai ("Prayers"), lame wrinkled daughters of Zeus who, if summoned, heal the wounds inflicted by Até but bring fresh evil upon the stubborn. Zeus expelled her from Olympus and she fell to earth in Phrygia on the hill which took the name of the Hill of Error and the spot where Troy was to be built.

Rarely blind in classical literature and never in classical art, Cupid (Eros) became blind or blindfolded in the late Middle Ages and was associated with Night, Synagogue, Infidelity, Death and Fortune (caeca Fortuna). He was especially associated with Death and Fortune who were not only blind but personifications of an active force without sight, hitting out at random.

The 15th century French poet Pierre Michault wrote a poem called *La Danse aux Aveugles* in which Love, Fortune and Death are the three blind powers which make mankind dance to their wanton imperatives:

> Amour, Fortune et Mort, aveugles et bandés,
> Font danser les humains chacun par accordance.

In India he is Kama, who like Eros was the firstborn of the gods at the creation of the universe, Desire being the primal germ of the universal mind. But he is not the fleshy Cupid of the Romans, instead having a fierce aspect. He is the husband of Rati, goddess of sensual desire. He is Dipaka, "the inflamer;" Gritsa, "the sharp;" Maya, "the deluder;" Mara, "the destroyer;" Ragavrinta, "the stalk of passion;" and Titha, "fire."

Kama carries a sugarcane bow which is stretched by a string of bees. He fires arrows tipped with flowers whose scent announces the sweet, inevitable attack of love. (In a 15th century painting by Cranach, Cupid, holding a beehive and being attacked by bees on his arm, chest and head, looks up complainingly to Venus, who has struck a rather fetching and uninterested pose, *sprezzatura*, underneath an apple tree.

> As a tiger pouncing
> from behind the branches
> seizes suddenly
> the helpless deer,
> her eyes glancing
> from within her blue sari
> have imprisoned me
> in their gaze.
>
> (Bihārī, from *The Satasaī*, trans. from the 17th century Hindi by K.P. Bahadur)

Eros is Protorhythmos in Dionysian cults, the first dancer and singer, an Orphic figure who gives impulse and rhythm to the dance of creation. Lucian writes:

> It would seem that dancing came into being at the beginning of all things and was brought to light together with Eros, that ancient one, for we see this primeval dancing clearly set forth in the choral dance of the constellations and in the planets and fixed stars, their interweaving and interchange and orderly harmony.

It is Eros who awakens us to the pulse of poetry and dance, its inexhaustible patterns and transformations.

> Love (Amor, Eros). . .can kindle in the souls of others the poetic fire. . .no matter what dull clay we seemed to be before . . .It was longing and desire that led Apollo to found the arts of archery, healing and divination—so he too was a scholar in the school of Love. It was thus that the fine arts were founded by the Muses, the smithy by Hephaestus and the loom by Pallas. . .
>
> (Agathon's speech in Plato's *Symposium)*

> Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
> Love can transpose to form and dignity.
>
> (Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

Christianity turned Eros into the harmless little rubicund fatty of Valentine's cards.

Eros has to do with penetration and then infection. There is quickening of the pulse and cutaneous vasodilation. The face changes expression and takes on an unhealthy pallor, followed by loss of appetite and weight. Lassitude sets in, then reclusiveness.

"Utterly hotheaded and reckless; as a man who would do a somersault into a ring of knives; as one who would jump into a fire," remarks Socrates about a disciple who had just kissed a youth of great beauty.

> Daphnis and Chloe dreamt that the Nymphs—the ones in the cave with the spring in it, where Dryas had found the baby—were handing Daphnis and Chloe over to a very autocratic and beautiful small boy who had wings growing out of his shoulders and carried tiny arrows along with a tiny bow. . .

So Daphnis, who was set on fire by all this, used to plunge into streams. . .and often he would actually drink the water in hope of extinguishing the fire inside him.

(*Daphnis and Chloe*, Longus: trans. by Paul Turner)

Dr. J. N. MacKenzie, Surgeon to the Baltimore Eye, Ear and Throat Charity Hospital, asserted in 1884 that the respiratory and olfactory mucosa has a structure analogous to the spongy central body of the penis and is equally erectable.

Only human beings look at one another while making love.

Youre yën two wol slee me sodeinly:
I may the beautee of hew nat sustene,
So woundeth it thurghout myn herte keene.

("Merciless Beauty," Chaucer)

Wine comes in at the mouth
And love comes in at the eye;
That's all we know for truth
Before we grow old and die.

("A Drinking Song," Yeats)

On this feast day, oh, cursed day and hour!
Went Hero thorough Sestos, from her tower
To Venus's temple, where unhappily
As after chanced, they did each other spy.
. . .
And in the midst a silver altar stood;
There Hero sacrificing turtles' blood,
Veiled to the ground, veiling her eyelids close,
And modestly they opened as she rose;
Thence flew love's arrows with the golden hand,
And thus Leander was enamored.
Stone still he stood, and evermore he gazed
Till with the fire that from his countenance blazed,
Relenting Hero's gentle heart was strook;
Such force and virtue hath an amorous look.

("Hero and Leander," Marlowe)

The sebaceous glands occur all over the body. Their secretions flow into canals in which bacteria break down the odorless sebum into a

pungent mix consisting primarily of fatty acids. The rancid, goaty odor of stale sweat is due to these fatty acids.

The apocrine glands in the axillae are responsible for most of a person's body odor. The odor of the axillary organ resembles musk, the perputial sac secretion of the Himalayan musk deer. Apocrine glands are densest in the armpits, the pubic region and the area around the anus, face and scalp. The axillary odor consists of a number of musky smelling steroids. Steroid hormones are produced by the gonads and their broken-down structures impart to urine its musky odor.

One of the steroids produced in the axillary organ is the same substance that is known to be a mating pheromone in the pig. The odor, which is urinous, is produced in the boar's saliva and when perceived by a sow in heat induces her to adopt the characteristic mating position.

> If I kiss Anthea's breast
> There I smell the phoenix nest:
> If I her lip, the most sincere
> Altar of incense, I smell there
> Hands and thighs, and legs, are all
> Richly aromatical.
> Goddess Isis can't transfer
> Musks and ambers more from her:
> Nor can Juno sweeter be,
> When she lies with Jove, than she.
>
> ("Love Perfumes All Things," Herrick)

Perfumes can be analyzed in their parts: the upper notes are made from the sexual secretions of flowers, produced to attract animals for the purpose of cross-pollination and often formulated as mimics of the animal's sex pheromones. Many of these contain compounds with a fecal odor. The middle notes are made from resinous materials which have odors not unlike those of sex steroids, while the base notes are mammalian sex attractants with a distinctly urinous or fecal odor. (*The Scented Ape*, D. Michael Stoddart)

> So quicke, so hot, so mad is thy fond sute. . .
>
> (Campion)

> A touch from any part of her had done 't:
> Her hand, her foot, her very look's a cunt.
>
> ("The Imperfect Enjoyment," John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester)

How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!
how much better is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!
Your lips distil nectar, my bride;
honey and milk are under your tongue,
the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon.
A garden locked is my sister, my bride!
A garden locked, a fountain sealed.
Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates
with all choicest fruits,
henna and nard,
nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon
with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes
with all chief spices.
A garden fountain, a well of living water
and flowing streams from Lebanon.

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden, let its fragrance be wafted abroad.
Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.
("The Song of Solomon")

Mina Loy writes in the first of her love songs:

Spawn of fantasies
Sifting the appraisable
Pig Cupid his rosy snout
Rooting erotic garbage
"Once upon a time"
Pulls a weed white star-topped
Among wild oats sown in mucous membrane
I would an eye in a Bengal light
Eternity in a sky-rocket
Constellations in an ocean
Whose rivers run no fresher
Than a trickle of saliva

There is a trade-off in pain attending all this feasting and rooting unlike anything else. There is great, subterranean shifting and displacement, as if of continents and tectonic plates, as if of one's inner organs. And into the breach pours appetite, an appetite which cannot be slaked.

. . .love-struck wretches
Who, on the very verge of consummation
Can't make their minds up, thrash about, uncertain
Which they should pleasure first—their hands? their eyes?
So they bear down with all their weight, or squeeze
Tight as they can, the body they have sought,
They make it hurt, take hold of lips with teeth,
Kiss with insistent fierceness. Such delight
Is never pure, for in its impulse lies
The appetite for pain, the urge to hurt,
The germinal seeds of madness. Even so,
In the midst of love, ever so lightly,
Venus abates the punishment, and blends
A sweetness with the sharpness of the bite.

(*The Nature of Things*, Lucretius: trans. by Rolfe Humphries)

Eros, The Bittersweet is the title of a book on Eros and poetry by the Classics scholar Anne Carson. The title is from Sappho's *glukupikron*:

Eros once again limb-loosener whirls me
bittersweet, impossible to fight off, creature stealing up.

Behind her several arguments is the larger notion that Eros is something quite specific, as opposed to describing any and all aspects of love and sexuality. It is desire. I realize that the word has become fashionable, thus next to meaningless, but it's the best we've got and it will have to do. Professor Carson is speaking of a desire that cannot be fulfilled without jettisoning the set of tensions that describe the nature of Eros.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
  Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
  Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
  Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
    Bold Lover, never, never canst thous kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
    She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
  Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

("Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats)

Her argument, in large measure, compels us to discount what we casually think of as erotic literature, be it the bawdy ballads and catches of Anon. ("A comely Dame of Islington / Has got a leaky Copper; / The Hole that let the liquor run, / Was wanting of a Stopper. . .") or a chill rising through the sleeve of the lovelorn Izumi Shikibu, or Bataille's little Michele dipping her twat in a bowl of milk. Likewise, most of the love conventions and motifs fall outside of Eros's purview, be it Swahili marriage chants or the inadvertently comical posturing and hyperbole of Anne Sexton's "In Celebration of My Uterus" or Charles Bukowski's *Love Is a Dog from Hell.*

One can only speculate on what caused the erosion and disappearance of the convention of Eros in English. The fashionable love poetry of today reads like Oprah-babble, but with line-breaks. Perhaps it had to do with Romanticism and the evolution of the individualistic, psychological "I." There are remnants of the convention here and there, like Edward Arlington Robinson's old Greenwich Village-y curio, *Eros Turranos.*

The convention does exist, and thrive, in contemporary popular music; rock, country, blues, you name it:

> Oooooooeee, baby, you're driving me crazy, etc.

And it endures in fiction. Kawabata's *Snow Country* is erotic. So is *Death in Venice* and *Lolita.* Henry Miller is *not* erotic.

It might be mentioned in this context (given the natures of the adored and adoring in the three aforementioned titles) that Eros exists independently of procreation or of any Darwinian notions of sustaining or improving the species. Traditionally, erotic poetry involves illicit love, and the objects of this love are often courtesans, servants, the very young, members of the same sex and those already married. It's trouble.

> Unhappie is the man for evermair
> That tills the sand and sawis in the air;
> But twice unhappier is he, I lairn,
> That feedis in his hairt a mad desire,
> And follows on a woman throu the fire,
> Led by a blin and teachit by a bairn.
>
> ("Venus and Cupid," Mark Alexander Boyd)

> Forbidden fruit is responsible for many a bad jam.
>
> (Country & Western song)

Lucretius, in the magnificent Book IV of his *De Rerum Natura*, does it nicely:

> For normally men fall toward a wound, and blood
> Wells outward toward the blow that wounded us;
> Yes, if the enemy's close, he's drenched with blood.
> Thus, he who's wounded by the bolt of love
> . . .turns toward the source of hurt, and aches for union
> To jet his humors, body into body. . .
>
> (trans. by Frank Copley)

Aristophanes, in Plato's *Symposium*, tells us that originally there were three sexes, one of which partook of the nature of man and woman but has since vanished from the earth. Also, originally, each human being was a rounded whole, with double backs and flanks forming a circle. The creature had four hands, four legs, and two identical faces upon a circular neck with a common head, the faces turned in opposite directions. When this creature wanted to run quickly it made use of all eight limbs, turning rapidly over and over in a circle, like a tumbler performing cartwheels. The male sprang from the sun, the female from the earth, and the hermaphrodite from the moon, which partakes of the natures of both sun and earth. These creatures, in their arrogance, finally challenged Zeus' authority and were punished by being cut in two. Thus, each yearned for the other half from which it had been severed. Zeus took pity on them and, with Apollo's help, moved their reproductive organs to the front so the two halves could be rejoined, however temporarily, through intercourse. Again, Lucretius:

> . . .Eagerly
> They press their bodies close, join lips and tongues,
> Their breath comes faster, faster. All in vain,
> For they can gather nothing, they cannot
> Effect real penetration, be absorbed
> Body in body, utterly. They seem
> To want to do just this. God knows they try,
> Cling to each other, lashed in Venus's chains
> Till finally, all passion spent, they die,
> Relaxed completely from that violence,
> Melted, undone; so for a little time
> The furious fire subsides. But it will blaze,
> Break out again in madness, and they'll seek
> Again whatever it is they want to reach,
> Find no prescription, no device to stop

This rank infection, so they peak and pine,
Confused and troubled by their secret wound.
(trans. by Rolfe Humphries)

The interrelationships between Eros and poetry occur on any number of levels. Surely the intensity of the experience, the white heat of desire, drives us out of our atmospheres, quotidian and psychological, and causes us to *see*. Eros is not the sole transforming emotion that causes us to see, but it's a humdinger. One would not ordinarily choose for himself a passage through anguish, yet poets seem to cultivate it, and at grievous risk. From a sort of actuarial point of view, one cannot pass through these flames too many times without becoming terminally flambéed.

> Love greatly resembles an application of torture or a surgical operation. Do you hear these sighs—preludes to a shameful tragedy—these groans, these screams, these rattling gasps? Who has not uttered them, who has not inexorably wrung them forth? . . .These eyes rolled back like the sleepwalker's, these limbs whose muscles burst and stiffen as though subject to the action of a galvanic battery—such frightful, such curious phenomena are undoubtedly never obtained from even the most extreme cases of intoxication, of delirium, of opium taking. The human face, which Ovid believed fashioned to reflect the stars, speaks here of an insane ferocity, relaxing into a kind of death.
>
> (*Intimate Journals*, Baudelaire: trans. by Christopher Isherwood)

The great compendium of love's torments is to be found in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy.*

> But the Symptoms of the mind in Lovers are almost infinite, and so diverse, that no Art can comprehend them: though they be merry sometimes, and rapt beyond themselves for joy, yet most part, Love is a plague, a torture, an hell, a *bitter-sweet* (my italics) passion at last. . .For in a word, the Spanish Inquisition is not comparable to it; a torment and execution it is, as he calls it in the Poet, an unquenchable fire, and what not? From it, saith Austin, arise biting cares, perturbations, passions, sorrows, fears, suspicions, discontents, discords, wars, treacheries, enmities, flattery, cozening, riot, lust, impudence, cruelty, knavery, &c. . .Every poet is full of such catalogues of Love Symptoms

This section of the book, *Symptoms of Love*, goes on for a number of pages until the reader comes, with relief, to *Remedies of Love.*

Another source on the subject in Ficino's 15th century commentary on Plato's *Symposium.* Ficino is much taken by blood, choler and the vapors that attend bestial love, as opposed to divine or human love.

> . . .The entire attention of a lover's soul is devoted to continuous thought about the beloved. . .Moreover, wherever the continuous attention of the soul is carried, there also fly the spirits, which are the chariots, or instruments of the soul. The spirits are produced in the heart from the thinnest part of the blood. The lover's soul is carried toward the image of the beloved planted in his imagination, and thence toward the beloved himself. To the same place are drawn the lover's spirits. Flying out there, they are continuously dissipated.
> . . .when the pure and clear blood is dissipated, there remains only the impure, thick, dry, and black. . .For from dry, thick and black blood is produced melancholy, that is, black bile, which fills the head with its vapors and dries out the brain.
> . . .When the ancient physicians observed these things, they said that love was a passion very close to the disease of melancholy. And the physician Rhazes taught that it was cured by coitus, fasting, inebriation and walking.
>
> (trans. by Sears Jayne)

One modern scholar, J.R. Broadbent, avers that synaesthesia and the crowding together of heavy stresses (like the lover's breaths?) serve the specifically erotic poem. He cites two examples:

> There are fragrances, fresh as the flesh of children,
> Sweet as the oboe, green as the prairie.
>
> ("Correspondences," Baudelaire: trans. by Kate Flores)

> When all my five and country senses see
> . . .
> The whispering ears will watch love drummed way
> Down breeze and shell to a discordant beach,
> And, lashed to syllables, the lynx-tongue cry
> That her fond wounds are mended bitterly.
> My nostril see her breath burn like a bush.
>
> (Dylan Thomas)

In her essay, "Love's knowledge," Martha Nussbaum writes about *katalépseis*, about the cataleptic impression having the power, through its own felt quality, to convince us that things could not be otherwise. "But this knowledge, which the shrewdest perceptions of the mind would not have given me, had now been brought to me, hard, glittering, strange, like a crystallized salt, by the abrupt reaction of pain." (*Remembrance of the Things Past*, Proust)

Eros awakens us to the world and its particulars and helps us to order experience into artful shapes and rhythms, but by courting the daimon the poet is challenging the gods with all the insolence and overweening ambition of the original humans, only to risk being incinerated or cut in half, one part of himself forever looking in vain for the other.

> The mirror of the movements of Hortense
> Images everything monstrous.
> Her solitude is erotic mechanics,
> Her lassitude the dynamics of love.
> Under the guard of her childhood, she has been
> For numerous ages and ages
> The fiery purge of the race.
> Her door is always open to suffering; there,
> Human morality dissolves in her passion, or in her acts.
>
> The terrible shudder of hesitant love
> On bleeding ground, in a hydrogen glare!
>
> Find Hortense.
>
> ("H," Rimbaud; trans. by Paul Schmidt)

Some Amatory Epigrams from the Greek Anthology

Melissa pulled one reddish hair
From her braid and tied my hands
With it. I was her prisoner. I
Told her never to let me go.

Paulus Silentiarius (V, 230)

Sometimes secret love affairs
Yield more honey than those
Which are open.

Paulus Silentiarius (V, 219)

She kissed me one evening with
Wet lips; her mouth smelt sweet
As nectar. I'm drunk with her
Kiss. I have drunk love in
Abundance.

Anonymous (V, 305)

Melissa's beauty is the gift of
The god Eros; Aphrodite charmed
Her bed; the Graces gave her grace.

Meleager (V, 196)

In my heart Eros himself created
Sweet-voiced Melissa, the soul
Of my soul.

Meleager (V, 154)

Might it not be that someday in
Legend soft-gliding Melissa will
Surpass the Graces themselves?

Meleager (V, 148)

I swear, I swear it by Eros, I
Would rather hear her whisper in
My ear than listen to Apollo
Playing his lyre.

Meleager (V, 141)

I held her close, we were breast
To breast, hers supporting mine,
Her lips joined with mine. As for
The rest, the little bedlamp was the
Only witness; I am silent.

Marcus Argentarius (V, 128)

Her kiss is like the lime that
Catches birds. Her eyes are fire
And when she looks at me I also burn.
If she touches me she has me caught
Fast.

Meleager (V, 96)

I wish I were a rose, a pink rose,
For you to pick and press against
Your snowy breasts.

Anonymous (V, 84)

Beauty without charm is only pleasing.
It's nothing to remember. It's like
Fishing with bait by no hook.

Capito (V, 67)

We fell in love, we kissed, you gave
Yourself to me, we had much pleasure.
But who am I, and who are you? How
did it happen that we came together?
Only the Kyprian goddess knows.

Anonymous (V, 51)

Gray are her lovely eyes, her cheeks
Of crystal. Could you not call her
Sweet mouth a rose? Her neck is of
Marble, her breasts smooth as marble.
Her small feet? They are more charming
Than those of silver-footed Thetis.

Rufinus (V, 48)

For so long, my darling, I prayed to
Have you with me at night, touching
And caressing. And now your love has
Brought me that happiness. You are
Beside me, naked. But why do I become
Drowsy? I owe you this felicity forever.

Rufinus (V, 47)

Beware a girl who is too ready,
But also one who hangs back too
Long. One is too quick, the other
Too slow. Look for one who is
Neither too plump nor too thin.
Too little flesh is as bad as too
Much. Never run to excesses.

Rufinus (V, 42 & 37)

Whether you have colored your hair
Dark or have it its natural shade,
It frames your dear face in beauty.
The god Eros loves your hair and
Will still be twining his fingers
In it when it is gray.

Anonymous (V, 26)

Shall we take a shower together,
Soaping ourselves and rubbing each
Other, flesh to flesh; then put on
Our robes and sip a good wine? The
season of such joys in short; then
Comes old age and finally death.

Rufinus (V, 12)

Make the bedlamp tipsy with oil;
It's the silent confidant of things
We seldom dare to speak of. Then
Let it go out. There are times when
The god Eros wants no living witness.
Close the door tight. Then let the
Bed, the lovers' friend, teach us
The rest of Aphrodite's secrets.

Philodemus (V, 4)

MARTHA ANN **SELBY**

from the Gāthāsaptaśatī

The Gathasaptasati ("700 poems in *gatha* meter") is an anthology of secular and erotic verse in Māhārāṣṭrī Prākit, and collected by Hāla, a king of the Sātavāhana dynasty. He ruled from 20 to 24 C.E. in a Telugu kingdom that was based in what is now north-central Maharashtra, India.

—M.A.S.

1.29

Now without him,
I remember all the pleasures tasted.

The rumble of new clouds
sounds like an executioner's drum.

1.93

Aunt,
I drank him in
for all of a second,
and I wasn't satisfied

as if my thirst could be quenched
by water drunk
in a dream.

3.4

Aunt,
how can I tell him,
with my heart about to burst?

Like an image on a mirror,
my pain will not enter him.

3.38

A scabby fool
will trade his shawl
for an ox
in the dead of winter,
looking at the breasts
of that dusky girl
as if they're smokeless embers.

3 .71

How can you describe her?

When your gaze falls
on one of her parts,

like a sick cow fallen
in mud,

it cannot escape.

4.3

Even in a reeling world
as great as this
teeming with thousands
of gorgeous women,

nothing at all resembles
her right half
except her left.

4.51

Even he was abashed
and I laughed
and held him close
when he went for the knot
of my underclothes
and I'd already untied it.

4.58

I'll make love with her here—

while he thinks this
with his heart,
the sowing seed,
wet with sweat
from the wretch's hand,
drops to the ground.

4.97

Those women
who can see their lovers
in dreams
are lucky

but without him,
sleep won't come
so who can dream?

HIROAKI **SATO**

Princess Shikishi: A 100-Poem Sequence

Princess Shikishi, the third daughter of Emperor Goshirakawa (1127–92), was born in the early 1150s and died in 1201. She was the vestal of Kamo Shrine from 1159 to 1169. During her lifetime, the warrior class rose and eclipsed the aristocracy. In their decline, however, aristocrats produced some of the best poetry in 5-7-5-7-7-syllable tanka form, culminating in the eighth imperial anthology *Shin-Kokin Shû,* compiled in 1205. Forty-nine of Shikishi's poems were included in the anthology of 1,979 pieces.

By the time Shikishi began to write tanka, the practice of composing a set of 100 pieces for exercise, competition, or formal presentation had been established. Such a set normally consisted of six basic categories—spring, summer, autumn, winter, love, and miscellany—with the pieces in each showing temporal or narrative progression, as may be typically seen in the sequence translated below. Because of the ease of composing tanka (in a straight, unadorned translation, a tanka is only a little longer than a heroic couplet, and some of Shikishi's contemporaries needed less than two hours to composed a 100-poem set with complicated specifications), Shikishi is believed to have composed many such sets. But only three of them remain in near-perfect form. These three, along with about 100 pieces "gleaned" from various anthologies, are translated in my forthcoming *String of Beads: Complete Poems of Princess Shikishi* (Univ. of Hawaii Press).

—H.S.

Spring

In spring too what first stands out is Mount Otowa: from the
snow at its peak sunrays appear

Though warblers have not called, in the sound of cascades
pouring down the rocks spring is heard

Through a bud-tinted plum tree the evening moon begins to show light of spring

As spring comes my heart melts, and I forget how, like soft snow, I go on fading

As I look around, now here, now there, it's covered with spring robes, their woof feeble still

Isolate my life, seclude it with layers of haze, deeply, at the foot of the Hill of Gloom

It's spring: to my heart's content I gaze at the treetops shrouded in haze and budding

Opening on plum twigs in unfaded snow, the first blossoms for dyeing bring back the past

In whose abode did they touch plum blossoms? The scent transferred so distinct on your sleeves

Plum blossoms accompanied by a tinge of love: their scent on your coat distinct, unfaded

About blossoms I do not know; there, not there, I look around: haze fragrant on a spring dawn

Would there were other means of consolation than flowers: coldly they fall, coldly I watch

When I count the seasons past, fleeting, so many springs wistful of flowers I've come through

Everyone, look at Yoshino's mountain peaks! Are the clouds cherry, the blossoms white snow?

I do not know about hilltops with cherry in bloom; now in spring haze a thousand hues fade

A spring breeze must have passed the gable eaves: the accumulated snow fragrant where I lie

In the moonlight remaining after daybreak, faintly falling blossoms hidden among leaves

Warblers too, wearied as spring ends; no more visits at night and my house is desolate

The geese, now heading for home, can't help saying farewell to the clouds aglow at dawn

Today's the last; haze with its hues rises and parts, spring at sunset in the hilltop sky

Summer

Sad to change, I have taken off my spring-hued robe, sleeves, not of the past, laden with dew

Cuckoo still traveling cloud-borne, for you to take shelter I have planted these deutzia flowers

I shall not forget the dewy dawn, when I tied *aoi* to grass and slept outdoors transiently

Did the cuckoo pity me and speak in the sky? As sleepless nights accumulate, a midnight call

A rain has passed over the orange in bloom, but no cuckoo visiting, I wet my sleeves

Today again arranged and adorned: the eaves of my reed house, a cottage, full of flags

Tapping of a clapper rail far into the night, my moss-grown gate closed but to the moon

As I gaze, the moon dims, the face of my garden left with only a few fireflies

Leave, and not think of the past a moment? This house with so distinct an orange scent

Summer night: soon the crescent inclines, before the day breaks at the rim of the hill

Tracelessly clear this side of clouds, evening rain falls on the outer mountain slope

A short night: outside the window black bamboos sway, a touch of autumn while I sleep light

To the sound of water tumbling beneath rocks in pine shade, cicada voices coolly respond

Though shining sun is of a summer sky, clearly, the wind under the pine hill says its time has passed

Weeds in the boarded well far from the village now to be removed: autumn is next door

Autumn

Summer ended, today autumn rises; on Mt. Tatsuta at the sound of wind the color will change

Since a wind over rushes told me autumn came, my thoughts have been unusual at dusk

As I gaze, my sleeves feel cool: autumn evening on the Riverbed of Eternal Heaven

All in all, about autumn sorrows I'd ask someone else whose sleeves aren't as used to dew

Dew that forms in wind and tears are one, difficult to hold back
in autumn dusk

Sleeves have become a lodge for dew, ever since, heedless of
place, the autumn began

In autumn, only the way the evening clouds are, is what I gaze
at for no reason at all

Unnoticed, the passage has occurred: as I brood, autumn dusk
dew-drops fall on my pillow

Along the Chinese skirts of hills, mists rise above dew, in rifts
here, rifts there, brocade revealed

Travel pillow: lying on my side in dewy Iware Field; in the same
bed too, calls a quail

Evening mists forming in the depths of my heart, the autumn as
it wanes is mine alone

Dew seeping into the grass hut where the moon lives, tree
crickets on the eaves vie, singing

Oppressing all, sunken in autumn sorrows: village at the foot of
hills deep in evening mists

Where have the cloud-dwelling geese gone? The moon has
declined toward the west

If the moon had let me sleep at dusk, I wouldn't be thinking of
it, now near the hill

Autumn night's cloudless moon clouds over and, as night
deepens, seems to wet its face

I close my pine door no more, leaving it to the moon that
crosses the Plain of Heaven during the night

Despite all, the moonlight is not as of old, my thoughts turning more like a *shizu* spool

Mt. Saho's yellow oak leaves: is it because it's late autumn, color distinct through the mist?

Seeing off autumn that will not stay: as I gaze, leaves of garden trees scatter in one way

Winter

Godless Month: a storm, sweeping down the roof-edge, spreads leaves deep into my bed

What to do? Hues of a thousand grasses are a thing of the past, not a single flower's left

Over the shingled roof the shower's passed; what's falling, unceasing, must be the leaves

Loneliness is the habit of this house: I gaze at the leaves with frost spread over them

Come winter, the valley stream ceases its sound, the storm from the peak visits my window

Frost not falling from the grebe's wings however he flaps them: is he unaware it's moonlight?

At the edge of a winter pond, reed ducks move too busily for frost and ice to form

Uji River boat with brushwood unable to pull up to shore, drops from its pole turn to ice

Flowers and leaves of all colors, let them be: late winter night has this pine wind sound

As I wait, at every interval it grows white: faintly over Saho riverbed plovers call

Even on its own, the snow has light; more so when the moon stays on at break of day

The blowing winds and plovers gone along, hailstone sounds left at my barren eaves

Deeper than may be thought, more desolate: the mountain village in Ono as the snow falls

Who grows used to living here? A hut with a brushwood fence buried in the falling snow

Startled by the waves of years rolling up: ice comes to stay with my sleeves night by night

Love

No path for visits, though, known to none, my heart close to you goes back and forth

Have pity, if only a little: a grass-in-thoughts, I won't spill the dew lost on a lower leaf

Like a doe on a summer hill hidden in grass I'm here, you know, but you're trying to avoid me

Does he know how like a cloud on Mt. Katsuragi I rise and sit, and how I feel every time?

To count on nightly dreams to know someone faintly, one I think of but have yet to meet!

Wouldn't he say it's pitiful, I thought, as I went on loving him, I alone knowing it

Was that he? Tonight, no, but the moon in its vagueness gives a glimpse of his loveless face

Not even knowing the reality of the fleeting dark, I wander along from dream to dream

Though I think of him, on my sleeve spread for myself alone, the cascading sound intensifies

Heart's dam has turned into a harbor in my sleeves, though I've been single-minded all along

Pine wind on Takashi shore tumultuous with waves, I have sounded your name, which I miss

To go back to the past and see it: insuppressible Suma Bay with its waves and winds

"Much in love, but look at me, I'll still live," this is not what I said, and you know it

Painful or pitiful, they are unforgettable: how many times have the months and days returned?

If, out of much love, smoke flows toward you, regard it as the outcome of the pledge I made

Miscellany

As I grow used to the moss mat and rock pillow, the sound of mountain water cleanses my heart

No one to lose his way in the accumulated leaves; not even birds step in the garden of my house

If someone visits my quiet grass hut this rainy night, it must be because he pities me

Did I think I'd grow used to living in it: in Fushimi at dusk, in pine winds, this hut

In my cup I've shed tears for spring; gathering in a circle while traveling recalls the past

Hearing it wets my sleeves: clear across waves late at night the sound of those four strings

Deep in the mountains, through the pine door closed early, only moonlight slanting in at dawn

Every day, throwing my heart into the valley a thousand times, I am and I am not, while I live

Whether I resent the world or grieve over it I do not know, yet my sleeves are used to the tears

Each time I turn back to the past I parted with, the unreturning waves break across my sleeves

How could I have lived, live until today, while saying of someone, "If only he were alive"

Things seen, future not seen, all in the illusion that forms over my fleeting pillow

Like a floating cloud left to wind in the great sky, sad not to know where I will be in the end

Not knowing the dream without beginning has been a dream, will I wake when this one ends?

Unending as sedge roots that grow in Your Majesty's light, may Your Reign be everlasting

ERASMUS **DARWIN**

from The Temple of Nature (1803)

Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802) was the most famous physician in England, and Coleridge considered him the best writer in Europe. He was the first proponent of the theory of evolution (now attached to his grandson, Charles), the first to explain the principles of artesian wells and of fertilizers, the first to describe photosynthesis. He discovered how clouds form. He invented horizontal windmills, carriages, drill plows and canal lifts. From his study of linguistics he devised an alphabet of 31 letters which could phonetically reproduce all the European languages, and he invented a speaking machine, with a wooden mouth, soft leather lips, "nostril" valve and bellows that could say *mama, papa, map,* and *pam* with eerie accuracy. He had fourteen children with two wives, founded various societies, was instrumental in the Industrial Revolution, pioneered humane treatment for the mentally ill.

He wrote enormous treatises on animal and plant life, and a long Lucretian poem, *The Botanic Garden,* which condensed vast amounts of scientific knowledge into rhyming couplets and was a huge best-seller. His sequel poem, however, *The Temple of Nature,* failed dismally. It was published in 1803, reprinted in 1825, and has since only appeared once more, in a 1973 facsimile edition published by the Scolar Press in England.

In it, he gives a remarkably accurate account of evolution:

> Organic Life beneath the shoreless waves
> Was born and nurs'd in Ocean's pearly caves;
> First forms minute, unseen by spheric glass,
> Move on the mud, or pierce the watery mass;
> These, as successive generations bloom,
> New powers acquire, and larger limbs assume;
> Whence countless groups of vegetation spring,
> And breathing realms of fin, and feet, and wing.

But the reason for the poem's popular failure was Darwin's refusal to give God much credit for it all—and the Moral Majoritarians of his time couldn't take it.

Here are two excerpts from the book, which contains some 2000 lines of poetry and innumerable footnotes and appendices on nearly everything. The first, from Canto II, is a Blakean ecstatic and scientifically rational celebration of sex, laid out in the style of "Birds do it, bees do it, / Even educated fleas do it." [Which, by the way, originally began with the politically incorrect, but far wittier "Chinks do it, Japs do it, / Up in Lapland, little Laps do it."] The second excerpt is an extraordinary description of the flip side of reproductive bliss: the predatory nature of nature.

—E.W.

from Canto II: Reproduction of Life

[. . .]

So the lone Truffle, lodged beneath the earth,
Shoots from paternal roots the tuberous birth;
No stamen-males ascend, and breathe above,
No seed-born offspring lives by female love.
From each young tree, for future buds design'd
Organic drops exsude beneath the rind;
While these with appetencies nice invite,
And those with apt propensities unite;
New embryon fibrils round the trunk combine
With quick embrace, and form the living line:
Whose plume and rootlet at their early birth
Seek the dry air, or pierce the humid earth.

So safe in waves prolific Volvox dwells,
And five descendants crowd his lucid cells;
So the male Polypus parental swims,
And branching infants bristle all his limbs;
So the lone Tænia, as he grows, prolongs
His flatten'd form with young adherent throngs;
Unknown to sex the pregnant oyster swells,
And coral-insects build their radiate shells;
Parturient Sires caress their infant train,
And heaven-born STORGE weaves the social chain;
Successive births her tender cares combine,
And soft affections live along the line.
[. . .]

So tulip-bulbs emerging from the seed,
Year after year unknown to sex proceed;
Erewhile the stamens and the styles display
Their petal-curtains, and adorn the day;
The beaux and beauties in each blossom glow
With wedded joy, or amatorial woe.
Unmarried Aphides prolific prove
For nine successions uninform'd of love;
New sexes next with softer passions spring,
Breathe the fond vow, and woo with quivering wing.

So erst in Paradise creation's LORD,
As the first leaves of holy writ record,
From Adam's rib, who press'd the flowery grove,
And dreamt delighted of untasted love,
To cheer and charm his solitary mind,
Form'd a new sex, the MOTHER OF MANKIND.
—Buoy'd on light step the Beauty seem'd to swim,
And stretch'd alternate every pliant limb;
Pleased on Euphrates' velvet margin stood,
And view'd her playful image in the flood;
Own'd the fine flame of love, as life began,
And smiled enchantment on adoring Man.
Down her white neck and o'er her bosom roll'd,
Flow'd in sweet negligence her locks of gold;
Round her fine form the dim transparence play'd,
And show'd the beauties, that it seem'd to shade.
—Enamour'd ADAM gaz'd with fond surprise,
And drank delicious passion from her eyes;
Felt the new thrill of young Desire, and press'd
The graceful Virgin to his glowing breast.—
The conscious Fair betrays her soft alarms,
Sinks with warm blush into his closing arms,
Yields to his fond caress with wanton play,
And sweet, reluctant, amorous, delay.
[. . .]
Delighted HYMEN hears their whisper'd vows,
And binds his chaplets round their polish'd brows,
Guides to his altar, ties the flowery bands,

And as they kneel, unites their willing hands.
'Behold, he cries, Earth! Ocean! Air above,
'And hail the DEITIES OF SEXUAL LOVE!
'All forms of Life shall this fond Pair delight,
'And sex to sex the willing world unite;
'Shed their sweet smiles in Earth's unsocial bowers
'Fan with soft gales, and gild with brighter hours;
'Fill Pleasure's chalice unalloy'd with pain,
'And give SOCIETY his golden chain.'
[. . .]
HENCE on green leaves the sexual Pleasures dwell,
And Loves and Beauties crowd the blossom's bell;
The wakeful Anther in his silken bed
O'er the pleased Stigma bows his waxen head;
With meeting lips and mingling smiles they sup
Ambrosial dewdrops from the nectar'd cup;
Or buoy'd in air the plumy Lover springs,
And seeks his panting bride on Hymen-wings.

The Stamen males, with appetencies just,
Produce a formative prolific dust;
With apt propensities, the Styles recluse
Secrete a formative prolific juice;
These in the pericarp erewhile arrive,
Rush to each other, and embrace alive.
—Form'd by new powers progressive parts succeed,
Join in one whole, and swell into a seed.

"So in fond swarms the living Anthers shine
Of bright Vallisner on the wavy Rhine;
Break from their stems, and on the liquid glass
Surround the admiring stigmas as they pass;
The love-sick Beauties lift their essenced brows,
Sigh to the Cyprian queen their secret vows,
Like watchful Hero feel their soft alarms,
And clasp their floating lovers in their arms.

"Hence the male Ants their gauzy wings unfold,
And young Lampyris waves his plumes of gold;

The Glow-Worm sparkles with impassion'd light
On each green bank, and charms the eye of night;
While new desires the painted Snail perplex,
And twofold love unites the double sex.

Hence, when the Morus in Italia's lands
To spring's warm beam its timid leaf expands;
The Silk-Worm broods in countless tribes above
Crop the green treasure, uninform'd of love;
Erewhile the changeful worm with circling head
Weaves the nice curtains of his silken bed;
Web within web involves his larva form,
Alike secured from sunshine and from storm;
For twelve long days He dreams of blossom'd groves,
Untasted honey, and ideal loves;
Wakes from his trance, alarm'd with young Desire,
Finds his new sex, and feels ecstatic fire;
From flower to flower with honey'd lip he springs,
And seeks his velvet loves on silver wings.

from Canto IV: Of Good and Evil

The wolf, escorted by his milk-drawn dam,
Unknown to mercy, tears the guiltless lamb;
The towering eagle, darting from above,
Unfeeling rends the inoffensive dove;
The lamb and dove on living nature feed,
Crop the young herb, or crash the embryon seed.
Nor spares the loud owl in her dusky flight,
Smit with sweet notes, the minstrel of the night;
Nor spares, enamour'd of his radiant form,
The hungry nightingale the glowing worm;
Who with bright lamp alarms the midnight hour,
Climbs the green stem, and slays the sleeping flower.

Fell Oestrus buries in her rapid course
Her countless brood in stag, or bull, or horse;
Whose hungry larva eats its living way,

Hatch'd by the warmth, and issues into day.
The wing'd Ichneumon for her embryon young
Gores with sharp horn the caterpillar throng.
The cruel larva mines its silky course,
And tears the vitals of its fostering nurse.
While fierce Libellula with jaws of steel
Ingulfs an insect-province at a meal;
Contending bee-swarms rise on rustling wings,
And slay their thousands with envenom'd stings.

Yes! smiling Flora drives her armed car
Through the thick ranks of vegetable war;
Herb, shrub, and tree, with strong emotions rise
For light and air, and battle in the skies;
Whose roots diverging with opposing toil
Contend below for moisture and for soil;
Round the tall Elm the flattering Ivies bend,
And strangle, as they clasp, their struggling friend,
Envenom'd dews from Mancinella flow,
And scald with caustic touch the tribes below;
Dense shadowy leaves on stems aspiring borne
With blight and mildew thin the realms of corn;
And insect hordes with restless tooth devour
The unfolded bud, and pierce the ravell'd flower.

"In ocean's pearly haunts, the waves beneath
Sits the grim monarch of insatiate Death;
The shark rapacious with descending blow
Darts on the scaly brood, that swims below;
The crawling crocodiles, beneath that move,
Arrest with rising jaw the tribes above;
With monstrous gape sepulchral whales devour
Shoals at a gulp, a million in an hour.
—Air, earth, and ocean, to astonish'd day
One scene of blood, one mighty tomb display!
From Hunger's arm the shafts of Death are hurl'd,
And one great Slaughter-house the warring world!

BASIL **BUNTING**

The Lion and the Lizard

"The Lion and the Lizard" is one of a group of literary essays written by Bunting in the early 1930s. Not written directly for commission, these pieces differ from the rest of his prose of the period in their intensity and originality—and they remained, for the most part, unpublished in their day, despite Bunting's efforts. He sent this piece to Zukofsky from Tenerife with a letter dated 1st May 1935, in which he refers to it as "Found amongst old papers"—and asks his friend to find a publisher for it now that he's corrected the "few trifling errors."

It is published here in Peter Quartermain's transcription, with the permission of the Bunting estate and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, as a foretaste of the various publishing projects on Bunting's prose which are at last taking shape: in the first place "The Lion and the Lizard" will feature as one of a group of *Three Essays* to be published by the Basil Bunting Poetry Centre of Durham University in 1994: this is to be followed by Peter Quartermain's edition of Bunting's *Selected Prose*, and Peter Makin's edition of Bunting's lectures on poets and poetry.

Other essays from this group sustain Bunting's critique of the limitations of written English poetry, and together they form one of the more radical poetic statements of their day. This piece itself needs no further introduction, except to point out that Bunting's respect for Fitzgerald survived into an age when other translations of Omar were receiving high praise.*

—Richard Caddel

* "The Lion and the Lizard" copyright © The Estate of Basil Bunting 1993.

They say the lion and the lizard keep
The courts where Jamshid gloried and drank deep.

The lion and the lizard, though near at hand in Persia, are remote and almost legendary to an English reader. Omar says nothing of the lizard. The lion appears in some MSS, but the better ones have "fox." "In that palace, where Bahram gripped his cup, the gazelle breeds and the fox has his den." Omar is more humble, less sumptuously coloured, and yet more vivid: there is no hampering haze of glory between the reader and the object.

Similarly Fitzgerald has changed Bahram to Jamshid, the historical to the legendary. To the ordinary English reader this is merely a change of sound, and if Fitzgerald's motive were musical the change was perhaps justified. But he loses two things. There is nothing remarkable in Jamshid's palace being ruined and deserted, any more than in the complete disappearance of King Lud's. But Bahram was not then remoter than Coeur de Lion now is. It is as though the deer and badgers of Windsor Forest had occupied the castle. Secondly, the repetition of Bahram's name—three times—in Omar's quatrain hammers a point Fitzgerald's version slides over with smooth melancholy. Fitzgerald doubles the splendour: not content with a king he introduces a demigod; but loses the satisfying acridity of fact Omar has.

In the second couplet of this rubay Fitzgerald's marvellous ingenuity in finding at least partial equivalents for things one would think utterly untranslatable is shown. The Persian is based on a pun. The "wild ass" and the "grave" are alike "*gur*." Bahram's usual title in Persian literature is Bahram-Gur, because he was devoted to the difficult chase of the gur, (Xenophon describes this creature as much swifter than the horses of his period: πολὺ σαρ τῶν ἵππον ἔτρεχον θᾶττον, Anabasis V.)* and this was present to the mind of every Persian at the mention of Bahram. Omar says: "Bahram who spent his whole life catching the *gur*,—see how the *gur* has caught Bahram." No similar play is possible in English, yet Fitzgerald has found a play not utterly dissimilar.

And Bahram, that great hunter, the wild ass
Stamps o'er his grave but cannot break his sleep.

Anabasis, Book I, Chapter 5, 2; Xenophon is describing the sort of hunting possible in the Arabian desert during Cyrus' expedition to Persia: when anyone chased them, the wild asses ran ahead and then stopped still, *for they ran much faster than the horses*. I italicize the English version of the words Bunting quotes.

Yet somehow the function of the wild ass here is obscured and confounded with that of the lion and the lizard in the preceding couplet. The emphasis falls not so much on the deadness of Bahram as on the general desolation. But this has already been sufficiently indicated. There is no need to dwell on it. Fitzgerald imparts a semireligious solemnity wanting in Omar, together with a savor of redundance. A thin veil of redundancy is cast over the facts of the whole rubay.

Whilst admiring the accuracy of the verb "stamps" which is, in fact, the making of the couplet, and the deftness with which Bahram's reputation is spared the fatuity of a footnote (though perfect precision would require "that great hunter of wild asses"), one feels the loss of Omar's pun. Even, maybe, "the grave has caught him" or "seized him" or "hunted him down," any of which is a fair translation. It is like the difference between active and passive.

In this Persian has the better of English since it rejects the passive wherever a reasonable manipulation of the phrase can make it active. It is not in the character of Persian poets to think in the passive. Everything is conceived actively, even though the subject of the sentence must thereby be made impersonal. The loss of precision is illusory, since such sentences in the passive must imply an impersonal, or at least an unnamed agent: whereas the gain in directness is very great. The passive gives always an oblique view of the facts, always involves "second thoughts": is, ultimately, an inversion disguised.

Likewise the intransitive verb has often a strong smack of abstraction. The events that make up the world are for the most part such as can be exactly expressed by active, transitive verbs. (For full discussion of this, consult Fenollosa's remarkable essay "On the Chinese Written Character" printed in Pound's *Instigations.)* The most vivid poetry, in the long run the most durable because the least affected by changes of philosophic habit, is that which approximates most nearly to the structure of the event. (The morphology of interaction remains to be studied by a future race of scientists not committed to any monistic premise.) To the event—active—the result—passive—stands as a first abstraction, the first process of reflection and subjectivity; selective, that is, rejecting part of the fact to simplify classification. Creation, regarded as the Gods or ours, is not simple.

Fitzgerald's splendid and yet inadequate version of this rubay affords illustrations of other persistent vices of English Poetry. It is partly because it is so splendid that it is inadequate. Almost any of the translations of Dante would serve to exhibit this fault, as would likewise a comparison of any of Milton's descriptive passages with descriptive passages from Dante or Homer. Life includes splendour but is not sustainedly splendid. Effulgence is liable to blind the beholder to all save itself: the detail, the texture of life, is lost or blurred. In Dante, Homer or Firdusi the principal characteristic is

clarity and sharpness of detail: so too in Omar, brilliantly illuminated often, but only very rarely so as to dazzle, so as to make us think first of the radiance and only secondly of the radiant object. It is the occasional intrusion of this overgreat splendour that makes Dante's Paradise inferior to his Hell and Purgatory, at least in the estimation of those who read first, and with their eyes open, for poetry, not first for theology or religious exaltation. Omar can be splendid but his whole effect is not one of splendour, it would be perhaps a shade less erroneous to call it squalid. Fitzgerald is almost always gloomily splendid, at the cost of removing himself out of the world into what d'Annunzio might call a "world of poetry": an unreal, rapidly cloying place.

Of this splendour he makes his poem. Omar varies, now bitter, now ironical, now as Anacreontic as the music-hall drinking songs of the 1890s. Anon he is the astronomer in a world that has no ears except for quacks. He can be graceful, receptive, sensuous, or as verbal and intellectual as Laforgue, as argumentative, almost, as Lucretius. Of this there is little trace in Fitzgerald, who keeps one tone throughout: an exalted tone; but the poem, however homogenous, is lopsided.

Omar's cadence changes continually, Fitzgerald's little. His rubayat are all alike, of a measure that very well represents a good deal of Omar but is unable to change when he changes and allows but meagre license. Having found out a stately measure Fitzgerald conforms his gait to it continuously, whether the ground he is traversing is suited to it or not. He would rather level hills and valleys to one even plain than change his gait. He subjects matter to manner. Far otherwise Omar.

Sometimes the Persian rhythm is such that an English reader has almost the illusion of Fitzgerald's presence: evidence enough of his genius. But again it is broken or colloquial or it dances or chatters as Fitzgerald never does. Omar is not upon his dignity. He is more concerned with the impression made by the objects he has in mind than with that made by his own voice or figure; and these objects are such as the world is full of, not, for the most part, very august, though not necessarily therefore awkward.

These notes are not set down to belittle Fitzgerald who was a great poet, a great adapter of a greater poet, but to call attention to certain shortcomings of English poetry in general. English poets are too often on their dignity, they strive too constantly to be sublime and end by becoming monotonous and empty of lifegiving detail, like hymn-tunes. They have often been the slaves rather than the masters of their meters. (The sonnet exploited Wordsworth, not he the sonnet.) This is partly because they have neglected the music of Byrd and Dowland so much more supple rhythmically than English poetry or than the music of the classical masters until recently most in favor.

English poets are commonly too much of a piece to be anything but fragmentary, for life is not of a piece. Their movement, their vowel-successions, their alliterations, have been too commonly splendiferous, until verbal splendour has lost its virtue in English: and when, as recently, they have tried to restore it by the use of contrast, they frequently fail because they will not devote sufficient care and labor to anything much below the sublime; because they do not understand that cacophony is as least as intricate an art as harmony; because they despise or patronize jazz and other popular music; because, I might add, they do not value nor study Dickens, from whom they could, if they would, learn more about poetry than from Milton, Wordsworth, Baudelaire and Rimbaud rolled into one

In their debauch of easy magnificence—for it has become more difficult to avoid than to achieve the over-rich—English poets have hazed over sharp outlines and made too free a use of translucent but comparatively empty passives and intransitives, forgetting that the world of daylight and full consciousness is, above all, opaque and complex. They have sought yet remoter abstractions even by forced adjectives, and conceits, like some of Mr. Eliot's, painful to follow. They have often thought more carefully about the impression made by their own personality than about that made by the ostensible object of their verse.

'Ash Wednesday' might serve to demonstrate many of these errors.

Our greatest are not free of these faults. Few have resolutely "kept their eye on the object" (in Wordsworth's phrase), but these few have saved our literature from being merely a series of Marlowes, Miltons, Keatses. I would mention Burns, the last of Dryden, the first of Wordsworth, the author of "Arden of Feversham, " possibly Denham and Crabbe, as the few just men for whose sake Sodom may be spared. I do not imply that these were the best endowed of our writers: obviously not: but that they were those who best maintained their poetic integrity. Equally important has been the example of the series of great prose writers captained by Swift, Samuel Butler, Wycherley and Dickens.

Shakespeare's talents were much greater than those of any other north European writer, yet he who reads both Shakespeare and Dante must notice how Shakespeare makes three or four casts at an object, three or four approximations, by comparing which we arrive at his exact meaning. Often the multiplicity is disguised by deft dovetailing of metaphors; nevertheless the drawing, however marvellous its design, is blurred. Whereas Dante says a thing once and exactly. His outlines are sharp and precise.

Similarly he who reads Shakespeare and Homer or Firdusi must notice how Shakespeare fits his cadence to the need of the speaker (to some extent—often he is careless). Almost all his cadences are in some sense subjective. The epic music, on the other hand, belongs to the object, the matter in hand. Shakespeare's method is admirably suited to the theatre,

where actions and physical things are visible and where it is precisely the mood of the speaker that needs to be created, verbally and by dramatic gesture: but abusively by other poets to kinds far different to the infinite damage of literature.

Editorial note: In preparing Bunting's typescript for publication, I have not followed Bunting's suggestion in his 1 May 1935 letter to Zukofsky that "The bits in brackets would do better in footnotes." Anyone who wishes to read them that way can.

—Peter Quartermain

GARY **SNYDER**

Under the Hills Near the Morava River

She lay there midst

Mammoth, reindeer, and wolf bones:

Diadem of fox teeth round her brow

Ochre under her hips

26,640 plus or minus 110 years before "now."

Burnt reindeer-pelvis bone-bits
in her mouth,

Bones of two men lying by her,
one each side.

GEORGE **ECONOMOU**

Alanus de Insulis

Alanus de Insulis (Alan of Lille) was a theologian and poet associated with the School of Chartres during the twelfth-century renaissance. His *De planctu naturae* (1160–72) was written in alternating sections of prose and verse, a form known as *prosimetrum*, the chief model of which was the *De consolatione philosophiae* of Boethius. Alan's work is an allegorical vision in which the Goddess Natura appears to the narrator and complains to him about mankind's failure to heed her laws, her natural justice and virtue. After she reveals her identity to him, the narrator addresses her with the following sapphic ode, which contains many of the epithets associated with Natura and other great mother figures.

—G.E.

God's child and mother of things
this world's bond and untieable knot
earth's jewel, mirror of the perishable
our morning star.

Peace love power guidance might
order law end way leader source
life light brilliance beauty form
rule of this world.

Who
guiding the world with your reins
keep things together with concord's knot
and with the bond of peace
marry
the heavens to earth.

Who
reflecting on the pure ideas in the divine mind
coin every species
and clothing matter with form
shapes its cloak
with your thumb.

You
heaven befriends and air serves
earth honors and sea adores
to you
all things pay tribute
as Lady of the universe.

Who
setting day to night in sequence
give day the sun's candle
put to sleep night's clouds
with the bright
mirror of the moon.

Who gild the sky with stars
brighten aether's throne
filling the sky
with precious constellations
and manifold armies.

Who change the heavens' face
with protean shifting
and populate our airy way
binding it up
with your laws.

You nod
and the world's young again
the forest's tresses curl
and dressed in its shirt of flowers
the earth
takes pride in itself.

Who control the swell
and fall of the tide
stopping short the deep fury
so its surge
won't flood
our piece of earth.

ROBERT DUNCAN, ALLEN GINSBERG & CHARLES OLSON

Duende, Muse, and Angel

The following conversation took place at the legendary Vancouver Festival in the summer of 1963. Originally transcribed by Ralph Maud, and published with his annotations in the *Minutes of the Charles Olson Society*, it is copyright © 1992 by the University of Connecticut Library and reprinted with their permission. It strikes me as a remarkable document, not only for what is said—the occasional lightning in the heavy clouds—but also as a sample of how American poets used to talk, only thirty years ago.

—E.W.

Duncan: I think Lorca tells us what to think of the Duende in relation to . . .and he just said it was a daemon. And I don't think it's a personal rhythm; daemon's a real spirit, who attends you, and a resource outside yourself—although I know it's now supposed to be inside the psyche, but I've never quite believed that.

Olson: Well, do you have any problems with that division?

Duncan: No not at all. Element inside and outside.

Olson: Right.

Duncan: Except it's more fun if it's outside. Like wanting to go to haunted houses.

Olson: Matter of fact, if he's inside, damn well put him outside so that you *can* heed him there where you have to deal with it. Trouble with that damn Socrates' appropriation of him. . .

Duncan: He's walking around with him in his pocket!

Olson: . . .was that he kept a dirty little secret there on him. And, in fact, as it's been often said, the whole trouble is that suddenly all that used to be called muthologos died in that moment. Socrates didn't know a

goddamn thing about the stories of the past. Absolutely. They suddenly would. . .Story was to have died with Socrates. He didn't even know what the hell the point of it was of Helen hanging herself from a tree while he saw her, somebody, somebody getting a dirty piece of ankle or something. He didn't. Literally the rational imposes itself here.

Duncan: So the daemon was given a rational place to live, outside of any story, who, as it turned out, was in philosophy—like, he was in philosophy.

Olson: Mind you inside or out. Any story, inside or out. Right.

Ginsberg: Is it evident you can get any kind of personal physiological rhythm out of the Duende for use in poetry? Is that right?

Olson: It isn't. But is it? Doesn't Lorca—I used it in that review of Creeley's book, at the end—doesn't Lorca literally propose three poetries? A poetry of the Duende. . .

Duncan: . . .of the Muse, and. . .

Olson: . . .and the Angel. In other words, the *Geist*, for example?

Duncan: He opposes the Muse absolutely, which for him's French poetry. Apollinaire, he says has a stinky Muse.

Olson: Well, I can agree on that, but. . .

Duncan: . . .and he wants to arrive at the Duende all alone, and he doesn't want any of those Angels in there.

Olson: I think it's an enormously helpful division, and much more interesting than that one of Pound's, which lasted awfully well for half a century, but—the one which I heard you read into even in instructing somebody about phanopoeia. I think we ought to really treat that one below its formulation, as well as take the Lorca thing as a formulation which can be sort of felt out rather than to go below it. That's probably what should. . .

Ginsberg: What is the technique for going about feeling out the Duende, or feeling the Duende in you? Is there any way of conjuring it up? or conjuring it in you?

Olson: Well, you're—yeah, I don't know. I mean, are you—would you call yourself a Duende poet?

Ginsberg: Yeah. Duende.

Olson: You would? Well, what would you call yourself?

Duncan: Well, what will you cheat? [laughs] I find I'm not calling the ticket right now.

Olson: No, but just for the hell of it, use the tickets and see what you would. If I was shipping Allen to Lorca, to Spain, what ticket. . . ?

Duncan: I'd call myself a Muse poet, except for some complications.

Olson: Well, that's—we know about the complications. What about the simplification?

Duncan: The simplification, I think, is a Muse poet.

Olson: I think I call Creeley a poet of the Angel, if I'm not mistaken, in that review, didn't I? I said that he—did I not? . . .And I don't mean *you're* a—well, I'm not sure, as a matter of fact, that's like. . .You're interest is on various things.

Ginsberg: If you want to make it with the Duende, just you got to stamp your foot while you're making a poem.

Olson: I think it would be extremely valuable if everybody in this room sort of understood to some extent which of these three roads they most naturally are travelling on, at this point of time, anyhow.

Duncan: I have some definite earmarks that would indicate the Muse was in question. For one thing, melody and memory being as absolutely essential to my movement in poetry, so that if we were looking at it detective-wise it'd make a pretty good. . .And the appearance of—although I don't trust the appearance of Apollo. That's the trouble with what you evoke: you can't always be that sure. . .

Olson: You don't trust the appearance of Apollo? Well, I don't think you should, as a matter of fact. I can prove to you that Apollo and Aphrodite are god and goddess of a particular hour of twenty-four, and it's been—we've lost great lengths of strength because of the failure to specify

the—how do you say it?—the canons of mythology. We've really lost it, and we play around with something which really has much deeper and tremendous plant, or fix, for both life and work, in just this point: the birth of the two of them, even in the island they were born in and the conditions under which they were born, which is, whew, a title of both of them. It's rather hung back before they become sort of those dopey snivelling. . .

Duncan: Before they became Olympians.

Olson: I mean, you've got to be statuary rather than, in fact, the buyer. I mean, you know, the wickedest thing in the world is what happened to those. . .

Duncan: . . .Cyprus.

Olson: No, that's the latest. It's a little island, just off the coast. It's a double island, and she was born first, so she rowed her mother over to help her in the birth of Apollo; so Apollo gets born on one little island. . .

Ginsberg: Those on Rhodes?

Olson: No, no. . .I'm so stupid, you see. . .and its very great title they both carry. But the point I was—I would wish that you would be always sure about the damned Greeks. And you can get it in an enormous fashion by looking at that—at Clark's book on *The Nude*. There's one moment—I think the date is 476 B.C.—in which the damn model, the modeling, the model modeling, stencilled stamps, much as the American Express Company, imposed itself upon all of this, stiffened it up, made it ideal long before the three thinkers came along. The whole vision of nature and man was just put in a freezer like a popsicle. And even if it's beautiful, it still is—became a popsicle.

Duncan: Beauty was limited to the popsicle at that point.

Olson: Well, that's when beauty again got all. . .

Duncan: Absolutely closed, and everything else was out of it.

Ginsberg: Where does that happen?

Olson: It's exactly in the statue of who had been Kore and became Venus, and who had been Kouros, a Kouros. . .

Duncan: And became Apollo.

Olson: . . .and became Apollo. And these are very—these two were really great creatures of youths instead of what they come out as: everything we've ever had, which is simply Beauty, male and female, or Love, male and female. And they really are—they're gooped off from that point themselves. It's very hard to get at them because of that, because they—Venus becomes Callipygos, right? And Apollo becomes. . .

Duncan: Belvedere [laughter], like Belvedere Rose, or whatever.

Olson: Belvedere! O.K. let's go to the Hotel Apollo! It's an enormous stiffening, which I'm not sure we today are not just simply the other end of. We're now sucking the popsicle down to the stick. But, quickly, I mean, get rid of the. . .

Duncan: And waiting for the message on the stick.

Olson: Which has a message. Which again gets me back to. . .

Ginsberg: You get another free popsicle. [laughter]

Duncan: Yeah, you get another free popsicle, and you're back on the same round again.

Olson: Which gets me back to the advantage of not talking poetry as though it was that melopoeia, logopoeia, and phanopoeia were three sort of styles. But that does come up in Pound.

Duncan: But it doesn't work that way. . .at all.

Olson: . . .And it doesn't work that way. And, in fact, the bases on which any of us are really both living and writing is much more in Lorca's idea of the Muse, the Duende, and the Angel. What is his word for Angel, by the way, did you—? He just says Angel?

Duncan: Angel. Angel, straight on. And he dismisses it. But the thing is that the church—Mohammedan and Christian and Jewish churches had all dismissed the angels, officially. That again has a time when it couldn't fit in at all.

Olson: Yes, except that in the first half of the thirteenth century Ismaili nationalism is really rediscovering the angel like mad, is rediscovering an anthropology as well. It has a time in there which is as great as the

recognition by Whitehead that we only are living—that we're living only in an electromagnetic epoch, which may be five hundred million years long, but what a sort of a quick point that makes: that you don't exaggerate this great condition of the present. I mean, it is only one of other alternatives. So that suddenly you've found Duende, Muse, and Angel in some—both on some base line, which is interesting, as well as give yourself a chance to appropriate some anthropology or angelology which makes sense to you. And I swear the Muse is an anthropological—somewhere is an anthropological mantra. Is that eidolon, and now mantra is a sign, gesture as sign?

Ginsberg: Mudra. Mudra.

Olson: Mudra. A mudra.

Ginsberg: Yeah. But the Indians have Sarasvati, goddess of Learning, Poetry, and Muse; they have a goddess, with a mandala.

Olson: Yes, that's right. But we're not really *there*. Now that's phanopoeia and melopoeia, isn't it? That's when we're talking that. . .

Duncan: Yeah, anyway, but these Muses weren't goddesses. They danced around the figure, so that you could name one, one part of it, or one another, but they were a ring, dancing.

Ginsberg: Can you invoke Muse, you know, in its form?

Olson: Oh, and how! Literally. Certainly. I don't mean in the poem, but in the feeling and attitude. . .Oh, I got a Muse, and I just call her up, because I happen to know who she is. And I just think about her, and whew! No? I mean, it's that literal.

Ginsberg: I just wondered what you did.

Olson: Oh, sure.

Duncan: Sometimes she calls you up, in the middle of work.

Olson: Well, then I don't answer. I won't answer—I won't take any telephone calls; no telephone calls.

Duncan: . . .Certainly there's been—take Swedenborg, who thinks that angels are people and that people are essentially angels.

Olson: Well, I believe he's got a great idea there.

Duncan: Yeah, the self should be an Angel; or the self should be a Duende; then should self be a Muse? No. That's very disturbing.

Olson: No poet thinks so at all. That's why you have what's called the Muses.

Duncan: What's clear in my mind is the sense that the Muse is the music, and they dance; and that's it.

Olson: But equally Duende and Angel are objectifiable, too. There's three—I'm totally convinced that we really are talking three roads in and out, which are all on different planes, three different planes. And you may or not—*you* may be invoked or inspired by any one of those three, according to some peculiar corpuscular character of your own self. . .But the nine are late; the nine are late; the nine are like Ezra again.

Duncan: And the poet always says there's *a* Muse.

Olson: That's right. And if that is really true. . .

Duncan: And that may be Mama.

Olson: Usually is. It is, as a matter of fact. It's that little wife of Zeus, who . . .daughter? It's tough to say: was she a daughter or was she one of his girls? I think she was one of his wives, in fact one of the very earliest was Mnemosyne. No? Pretty sure.

Duncan: Was Mnemosyne ever in that Orphic order where the gods are out of the picture?

Olson: Well, I don't know. The great passage on the Muses, by the way, you can read is in Pausanias' visit to Helicon, where he actually sees the statues of the three Muses, not the vain—the nine is like the Olympian system. There were three, and they're wonderful, they're like, you know, like Graves's bullshit about the triple goddess, but they clearly are three powers, like you were talking *poiein*, and you're talking some other thing to arouse both yourself and anyone else.

Duncan: This is the thing that's called rhetoric, which is not only that it can flow forth but that it persuades.

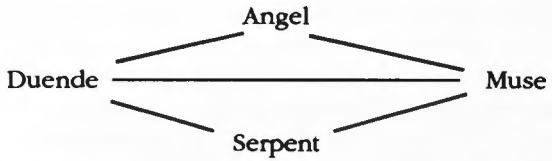
Olson: That's right. And rhetoric is, as you know—that's why I was teasing you the other night. We've been having—no, we haven't: don't think we have big, secret conversations. We have the same conversations, only in a different aspect. We were reading Wordsworth, we were fighting a battle the other night of Wordsworth and Shelley, and Allen wants to say that Shelley—"Listen to this rhythm!" And I said, "Oh, Christ, forget the rhythm. You make rhythms." But it's true, rhythm is really great if you take it on the level of the word *rhetor*, because *rhetor* is the same word as "rhythm."

Duncan: *Rhetor.*

Olson: *Rhetor*, right. That's quite true, but those—I've forgotten the literal names, like Melicertes and. . .

Ginsberg: Melpomene?

Olson: No, no, that's all that lot later. I believe that we're terrifically advantaged because everything that was that rational discourse structure that came in absolutely at 476 and showed itself first in the marble—yeah, the marble, really, right—has not only broken but we really have tremendous opportunity to walk around now in the areas where—where, like, the Indo-European people first put their hands in the real thing.



Audience: . . .the fourth corner. . .?

Olson: Oh, of course it's the Serpent, but we don't mention him. I mean, there is always a quadratic behind the three, but—uh? Sure, but we don't treat—sure, but we can treat Serpents properly these days. . .That drawing is very important, like. You carry that four where you can manage to carry 'em, and try it on 'em, that's all. See how well you can do with number four.

Duncan: These would be unstable if it weren't for the fact that there's a Shadow up—I mean, there's another triangle. . .

Olson: Very much there.

Duncan: They would tend to fly apart, and two of them would mate, and the third one would interfere, and everything would go—I mean, you'd be in one of those triangles, like they say, in soap operas.

Olson: Right, right. But you're also in that wonderful fact that happens to be "I". . ."I"? "I"? That happens to be "I" too—which we just—we left that—we asked, "Who? Am I. . .?" Duncan says, "Am I my own Muse?" Am I my own Muse? Are you—are you your own demonstration?

Ginsberg: What are the three corners here? What are they. . .?

Olson: Well, we just spoke—but she asked a real question. Say the Duende, the Angel, and, just for the present conversation, that's true too.

Duncan: But I think you were asking would you have more force if, instead of having this with this mirror, you had that, without this?

Olson: Yeah, do you?

Duncan: And you don't; it stabilizes, absolutely. I think it comes to a stasis, and instead of moving at that point.

Olson: Well, I think so. I would—well, those who've been into my class with me know that I think that that's a condition of something that is real, and we are the creators of that real; so that you are—so that you gotta be. . .if he says "stasis," right? But I don't—you'd better put that line back, otherwise. . .

Duncan: Yeah, I'd better. Yes, I know, that's what I put that for.

Olson: Oooooo! Oooooo!

Duncan: Taking that line away is part of what them magicians want to do; they keep wanting to get. . .

Olson: Very much.

Duncan: That's why they're not poets; I mean, that's why they're not writers.

Olson: I don't trust magicians for that reason. They're playing without that line.

Duncan: No, as a matter of fact, they look very silly; and they keep thinking if we took the line out, it would be one big open house.

Olson: It's not like tennis, but it's like marking off your steps. How many yards did you make? What lines do you draw?

Ginsberg: Now, wait a minute. Are we involved in drawing lines?

Olson: No. But we are divided, in a sense, from union. We are divided from union. . .By the way, statue here gets tremendously important: that's why I would talk "mudra," or whatever we want to talk about, because it's clear, by the way, that if you don't make a true—yeah, we used—you know, like, that word "image" is marvelous because it also does mean "eidolon," something which is objectively represented, or presented, right? And that was the great concept of an object: that it was something you either could carry, that you had in your house, or was in the public square. I mean, if you take that "David" by Michelangelo, standing in Florence, it's an enormously great figure, but I don't believe it carries any of this characteristic of object.

Duncan: First, it was stone, wasn't it? I mean, first it's a real gift to make, that's the thing. And every bit of its shaping. . .

Olson: Very much so. I never saw it so rude, by the way, as in Yucatan. One of the great advantages, to my mind, of Amerind civilization, who was full of—is to see how a city like either Uxmal or Chichen, which has enormously elaborate architecture. You remember the kooky pigeon house, say, at Uxmal? Or the Governor's Palace, right? Which is what? It's like one of them damned French things.

Ginsberg: So is "The Elaboration of Hell."

Olson: Well, that's a fake, like an architectural fake, but—but the Governor's Palace is an enormous building that this university and everybody else isn't any better with. And right in front of it was a phallus of stone just absolutely, literally, stuck there in the ground, in fact—and all over the place is this enormous jump between this image of nature, which is that thing we've just been talking about, and this incredibly literal building of any city anywhere in the world, for offices, or so. It's an enormous picture that you get when you—you can't see

it: the damned palaces have been removed, but. . .

Duncan: If you take that first stone that's given, and under it or—and to it could be said, "This *is* she." If you get to the Greek image, the one that Charles is talking about that sucked us in, by that time: "This *looks like* her."

Olson: Yes, quite. Very much, very much.

Duncan: Once "This looks like her," then "she" is some place, and "she" is an idea, and then "she" floats all over the place: she's Beauty, she's anything they want to name.

Olson: Right.

Duncan: But here at the beginning, the thing you do know was that—and as a matter of fact, when they dig it up they know; and that's what first things are, that this is "she," and she proves to be a stone, including all the things she was up here, Beauty and so forth. And even "idea" means "to see it," and must go back to that seeing the stone. . .But between that stone and the cut stone, the shaped stone, that's the danger. You're always working in a poem in the same thing that man has worked in, and when you come to "idea" poets, and Shelley's certainly one of them, and it's beginning in Wordsworth in parts, you are coming to a separation again between the statement "This is she" and "This looks like her."

Olson: I think so very much, because Wordsworth's weakness is not—as again you were quoting Yeats to me last night—is not at all that he had a system of thought, but that Nature had become a substitute for this thing that we're now talking about. Like, literally nature: you go out and you see—or he gets scared by a looming shadow out on the boat on the lake. I don't think that's a—he ain't being scared by a looming shadow out on the lake on a boat, he's being scared by some funk in himself. And we know these things: one of our chances is to be sure that we get to place the funk where it belongs, and not distribute it as though we were dealing with a formal character of the real. The real is only things. You got to be awfully sure that you got that fixed in your mind. Things. No, I mean, literally it only means it, and that's all it is. Otherwise, you're going to poeticize, tragedize, do a hell of a lot of "-izing" to what really has a greater impact. And in fact you are yourself a more critical problem because you're really independent of that enormous system. Yeats himself should be calling names; like, ahah! Let's talk about where *he* is. I mean, . . .

Ginsberg: . . .When you said the universe or the real is only things, or only in things, the problem there is you can have things without having them real also. I mean, you know, the eye doesn't see them. . .

Olson: You can't take anything away, Allen. You get nervous, I think, in saying that, 'cos you can't take a damn thing away from—you won't lose anything by just treating the universe as real.

Ginsberg: No, that's true enough, but. . .

Olson: It ain't going to go way, or it ain't gonna suddenly crack in.

Ginsberg: Righto, but when done doctrinally, then the feeling of the thing is lost. I've seen that operating in Williams sometimes.

Olson: Yeah, I know. Well, sure.

Ginsberg: Or from Williams.

Olson: Yeah, that's right. Williams sure has the danger.

Ginsberg: Or many of the young poets who are now writing "thing" poetry. "No ideas but in things" is completely without. . .

Olson: Well, I don't myself believe that Bill's adage is holding up now as interestingly either, because of the—because of how you said it: the "formulation?" What did you say for that stiffening that occurs when you've made a mold?

Ginsberg: Become doctrinal.

Olson: Doctrinal, right. I think the doctrinal in Bill's—I've even, not a month ago, felt—I can't get the feeling back now, but I felt some way that that statement is—can be now stated with a. . .

Ginsberg: Well, let me. . .of its time in its functioning it was quite perfect and will last, understood for what it was.

Olson: . . .Well, I asked Rony and Phyllis when we were driving back from the radio station—just to bring this home, like—I mean, "What do you do with the persons of your dreams?" The *persons* of your dreams: because that, to my mind, is a tremendous place that we are now free to possess in a way that—I mean, like

For al so siker as *In principio,*
Mulier est hominis confusio,—
The meaning of this sentence is,
"Womman is mannes joye and al his blis."

Which is that wonderful answer about dream that is in "The Nun's Priest's Tale" about—to fix it as real. I mean, he's really saying, "You know, like, you're a damn nuisance, but I'm going to tell you you're beautiful, because of this is"—who is the—? I mean, I would say you've got to treat the persons of your dreams, who are always (aren't they?) whom you know, I mean, essentially, I mean—no, I mean that level of dreaming which always is the persons you know: what do you do with those people? To bring this whole muth-mythologicalness in. Because the out seems to me much more—I don't know, from seeing it—for me it's much more easily demonstrable than the evidences of the same, I think, the same thing within. It seems to me we're absolutely exploded to re—and required to reveal all that's in our chest: "Let your hot heart burst!" What's the—? I mean, Ahab's great statement: "Burst his hot heart like a crater" or something "on the whole of it." I mean, that's a marvelous agony and anger—in his instance, violence, but, essentially, it's where *we* are, isn't it? I mean, to get it out, not to play as though there's two. There's an in and an out: that's no longer interesting at all. . .I'm struck at how the whole idea of dreams as wish-fulfillment, for example, is so essentially interesting if you take it. . .The old definition of the gods was that their wish was will. That's so exciting to me: that they were so called and have powers because their *wish* was will. There's no second start. The ordering is a single order of wish and will. That's beautiful, to my mind, and it releases the whole dream thing, so that you get an absolute one to one with the dream condition of the universe. You can call it "race" and you can call it "dream," because that wish/will thing is just an instant of power . . .I think one of the craziest examples of this is the greatest Angel known to man in the Greek system is Hecate; and I could prove—I could read you. . .I did for that Bollingen translation a long supposed translation of about fifty lines of Hesiod. There's fifty lines in *The Theogony* on Hecate, which ought to forever put an end to this use of her as the frightful goddess, the goddess of fear, which is one of the damndest clichés we have, really, is the idea—she's been a bore for how long? But in fact she is the great "angel" of her father; she does the real stuff. Whenever a real thing has to be done, she's sent to do it. It's an amazing fact that Hecate was really like, gee, I don't know, in our system, like Michael? In the Christian system, who's the—? The archangel, the archangel. She's the archangel, early, look; a woman

archangel. And, you know, she became, in some curious dumb problem of fear and fright, this monster. But she's no monster.

Duncan: That's when they made that division, I'm sure.

Olson: Yes, it is, completely. Oh, sure, absolutely.

Audience: The way Hecate is connected in my mind to what we were talking about before is that she is supposed to have three faces, isn't she?

Olson: No, that's the junk; that's the junk. That's the junk; that's the triple goddess junk of Robert Graves and *The White Goddess*. That's not. . .

Duncan: That's the later Demeter-Kore-Hecate.

Olson: She is called, really, *kourotrophos*: she is the nurse, the nurse of man and a nurse of life. Not the mother; the nurse, the rearer, the carer, the other thing entirely. And, as such, I mean, she is the instructor of all nursing; and she comes to the aid of those who need to lend somebody care, and not the—but she's tied, of course, tremendously to—to the Demet-mother, because when the mother loses her daughter it's Hecate that really knows where she is, not the people that saw Pluto take her, but *she* knows because that's her business, that's her world business. And she's in and out all the time because that's her function and responsibility, as Zeus's principal daughter. She's a wow, that woman; and I wish I had that passage with me because—I threw it away as verse, but, wow, it's unbelievably interesting material. It's easy to find, actually: it's in *The Theogony* under Hecate.

Audience: Is there anything special. . . [inaudible]?

Olson: Well, I could talk about it. I had a literal visit of my Angel to me this spring. It was a—talk about a dream!—I mean, he literally came; he was carrying a—he was behind the counter. I was having a cup of coffee with Dan Rice, who's a friend of Creeley's and mine, a painter, and another person who I've forgotten; and this fellow, this Angel, was the counter-man, and suddenly held up this fish, and the fish in—it was, by the way, that beautiful story in the Bible of Tobias and the angel, is it not? Is it Tobias? Yeah. It was absolutely. I could confirm to a tee the Tobias story, and, in fact, even to this: you remember the gull-shit that blinded—how's that get in there? Isn't Tobias blinded by gull-shit?

Audience: Sparrow.

Olson: A sparrow, right. Excuse me, I've made my. . .

Ginsberg: *Yeshiva bucher.*

Olson: Huh? *Yeshiva bucher.* Right. [laughs] Well, I've forgotten at the moment all the details of the dream, but, believe you me, the Angel comes straight to you, literally, and tells you everything, just like under the mushroom or something, you're absolutely told, on the moment, where you are, what you're not quite taking care of, and where you must get busy. It's valuable instruction, absolutely; and all you are asked for is obedience, which is the thing we most are disgruntled to give; but it is the thing that's asked all the time.

Duncan: I take it that imperatives that appear are really coming from there, and they can appear in a poem, imperatives of. . .

Olson: I don't know that you can get any deeper than the Lorca formulation on the instructional level of the poet to his work, actually, on it. That's what I think you're asking, Rona, is to get between life and reduction. And the truth is that these are the three terms that actually operate in the mystery of things to carry that, to carry all this thing: the Muse, the Angel, and the Geist. Would "Geist" be fair for Duende or no?

Duncan: No, because Geist, I think is like one's guide.

Olson: Tell me, what does *duende* literally mean? Can anybody. . .? Hawkins, do you know? . . .But what is *duende* in Spanish? "Technique"? "Craft"?

Audience: Craft.

Duncan: Well, then, it's fire. Then it's Hephaistos, fire. We got to go back to the daemonic; it's the fire.

Olson: It's crazy.

Ginsberg: But in Chiapas, *duende* is used for the people that come out at night and steal your cows, or start the horses neighing and running around and around.

Olson: Well, then we are back into the Celtic, yeah.

Audience: . . .Don't we use *duende*. . .in the way a singer sometimes has an electrifying air that comes into effect. . . ?

Olson: Yes, sure, sure.

Duncan: So Duende first was a flash of lightning, and a fire.

Olson: Or it's your ability, in that sense. Is that a legitimate. . . ?

Ginsberg: I heard the word *duende* used many many months, over and over and over again.

Olson: Well, it's an invasion of forces outside in, isn't it?

Ginsberg: Well, it's just sort of like a spirit comes in that makes the horses run around in the pasture in the moonlight.

Olson: Right. Right, well, that's a lowering of the idea, but it's a perfectly good case.

Ginsberg: *Hay los duendes en el potrero porque los caballos están rodeando.*

Olson: . . .It sounds awfully much at all points here that we're talking a release of one's ability.

Ginsberg: Yeah, because it was a released—a released god.

Audience: It's pretty hard to translate it into. . .

Olson: Yeah, I don't think we need to. We've gotten the essential meaning out of it. . .I don't find any problem in calling this the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost was absolutely a practical manual of how to speak; and that was what he was to do, and does. We've got something here going on certainly which ties to Robert's talking in his lecture about the hero. And what was—? You said two things have fallen to the poet: the hero and the—you said two. . .priest?

Duncan: Yeah, priest.

Olson: But, well, but—this is a laird, right across the board, of Duende, Muse and Angel.

ANSELM **HOLLO**

The Complete Poems of Hipponax of Ephesus

William Carlos Williams ends Book One of his epic poem *Paterson* with a quote from John Addington Symonds' two-volume *Studies of the Greek Poets* (Vol. I, p. 284), prefacing it with an "N.B.":

> In order apparently to bring the meter still more within the sphere of prose and common speech, Hipponax ended his iambics with a spondee or a trochee instead of an iambus, doing thus the utmost violence to the rhythmical structure. These deformed and mutilated verses were called. . .[choliambi], lame or limping iambics. They communicated a curious crustiness to the style. These choliambi are in poetry what the dwarf or cripple is in human nature. Here again, by their acceptance of this halting meter, the Greeks displayed their acute aesthetic sense of propriety, recognizing the harmony which subsists between crabbed verses and the distorted subjects with which they dealt—the vices and perversions of humanity—as well as their agreement with the snarling spirit of the satirist. Deformed verse was suited to deformed morality.

There is an echo of this quote, one that Williams had found relevant to his search for a new measure, in the final lines of Book Five, the last complete installment of *Paterson*:

> We know nothing and can know nothing
> but
> the dance, to dance to a measure
> contrapuntally,
> Satyrically, the tragic foot.
>
> (p. 239)

This was not my first introduction to the Ephesian inventor of the "limping foot" who lived and made poems around 540 B. C. I had read what

remains of his work in a book by the late Finnish poet Pentti Saarikoski, a contemporary and a friend, who in 1959 published a collection of poems titled *Runot ja Hipponaksin runot* ("Poems and the the Poems of Hipponax")

Saarikoski, one of the major European poets of this century, was also a prolific translator from the classical Greek as well as from the modern classics, including Joyce's *Ulysses*. While he went on to write two powerful postmodern "epics" (*What Is Really Going On* and *Trilogy*), in the 1959 volume he demonstrated his interest in how brief a poem may get and still be "a poem"—whether its brevity is due to the ravages of time (as in the case of many ancient Greeks), or to the author's desire to explore the possibilities of the laconic.

No "complete" poem by Hipponax survives. All we have is ninety-two mostly short quotes, in the works of later authors on history and its metrics and mores, chosen for being exemplary in one way or the other. Obviously, a fragment that was chosen as a "technically interesting" example of Hipponax's "lame or limping foot," the choliamb, may lose much of its raison d'être in translation:

what a mob

or

libations and innards of a wild sow

may not seem all that evocative, or merely evocative, hovering just below the threshold of "interesting." One might say that "The Collected Poems of Hipponax" as they can be found in The Loeb Classical Library's *Herodes, Cercidas and The Greek Choliambic Poets (Except Callimachus and Babrius)*, Edited and Translated by A. D. Knox, Late Fellow of King's College, Cambridge (1926), are an aleatory (or "stochastic") work composed by Clio, Muse of History, employing her own secret chance operations formula, in a tradition later brought to full bloom by John Cage and Jackson Mac Low, and also "cut-ups" in the related lineage of Tristan Tzara, William S. Burroughs, and Brion Gysin.

The arrangement of the fragments in the Loeb edition is chronological, i.e. in the order of the approximate dates of the extant papyri and other texts in which lines attributed to Hipponax appear. Saarikoski's Finnish versions follow this arrangement fairly closely. I have created an "intuitive" display of the pieces, consisting of four parts (or poems, if you wish), under the headings

Careless Love
(check out Dr. John's recorded version of that American classic),

What a Mob
(consisting of angry, vicious, and slanderous material),

Screech Screech Here Come the Ghosts
(Or, "People Who Died")
(see Ted Berrigan's poem), and

Still Waiting for My Winter Coat
(lines dealing with the ever-present needs and wishes of the unhoused and impecunious).

The four sections reflect what little is known about the poet's life.

From Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* we learn, in a passage dealing with the annals of Greek sculpture, that Hipponax was a satirical poet of Ephesus (c. 540 B.C.) who became involved in a feud with the sculptor Bupalos. The reason for this feud seems to have been a woman, Aréte, whose affections Bupalos alienated from Hipponax. Either before or after (we don't know) Aréte rejected Hipponax for Bupalos, the latter created a three-dimensional caricature of the poet, presumably in marble or some other stone. One wishes this piece of sculpture had survived; in Mary Renault's novel *The Praise Singer* (1978), a fictional autobiography of Hipponax's far more successful contemporary Simonides, we find the following description of the poet's appearance:

> . . .he limped on one leg, which he had broken as a child, so that it was shorter than the other. The foot turned in, and his rocking gait had twisted his whole body, making his shoulders tilted. I thought it no wonder he should be bitter, for princes would not want to see him about their courts. . .That his clothes were dirty, I put down to his having no wife; but I thought that in a city not short of water, he could have washed himself. He ate noisily, and was helped twice. . .
>
> (etc., p. 38)

Here, the "limping" measure is understood as the poet's translation of his physical handicap into a new poetics.

Whether or not Hipponax was physically repulsive and unsanitary, he certainly often found others to be so. He became notorious for his irreverent and slanderous verses, and after Ephesus became a Persian colony (presumably when Hipponax was still young and feisty), the new vice-regents of the city found him undesirable and politically incorrect and banished him:

> He did not go far, just north across the headland to Klazomenai. Now and then we would get news of him, or someone would bring back one of his poems. . .They grew more savage; we heard rumors of someone he'd caused to hang himself. He did not live very well, however, and came down to cadging from strangers in the harbor, or begging alms from people whose enemies he had reviled. He died, they say, lying in rags in the marketplace. . . One or two citizens, I've heard, poured oblations upon his grave, thinking his spirit would do mischief if not appeased.
>
> (*The Praise Singer*, p. 41)

Careless Love is the tale of Hipponax's infatuation with Arété, her rejection of him in favor of the sculptor Bupalos, and his subsequent indulgence in negative emotions. In *What a Mob* we see the scattered 2,500-year-old reflections from Hipponax's verbal laser beams as they were aimed at dribblers, gluttons, imitators of Homer, corrupt judges, dumb painters, witches, sadists, masochists, con-men—a parade of exponents of Symonds' "vices and perversions. . .[of] deformed morality." *Screech Screech Here Come the Ghosts* is a similarly patchy frieze of elegiac matter, *Still Waiting for My Winter Coat* a gathering of the ancient "street poet's" prayers, complaints, and curses, echoed later in the works of François Villon and our own Charles Bukowski. Pentti Saarikoski, in the notes to his translation, mentions Callimachus and Catullus as poets who regarded Hipponax as a master (and presumably still had access to the body of his recorded work).

Knox's and Saarikoski's translations have served as source texts for these versions. Like Pentti (who cites the Knox edition), I have tried my best not to stray too far from Knox's post-Victorian literalness, while also relying on Pentti's knowledge of classical Greek to guide me. Since mine is not a scholarly translation, I refrain from encumbering it with footnotes.

While giving Hipponax my best shot, I have sometimes wondered what on earth compelled me to engage with this oh-so-long-dead (white? probably coppery, and certainly ornery) male who was so obviously of the slash-and-burn persuasion in his private/political life and work, yet prone to feeling sorry for himself; whom Mary Renault suspects of having provided such eloquent negative poetic testimony on the character of one of his enemies that the latter was scapegoated by the citizens, not a pleasant process, who sounds as if he didn't like his species fellows very much—any more than they cared for him—?

The answer is, I think, simply that "now and then. . .someone would bring back one of his poems" from his ragged exile at Klazomenai, and that in this century, forty years ago to be exact, an admired and beloved friend

(whose own life was not lacking in Hipponactean themes) brought what is left of them to my attention. Then, there was that intriguing quote in *Paterson* by William Carlos Williams whose understanding of American idiom and measure went far beyond the literal. I hope his numerous poetic children and grandchildren will find some enjoyable moments in what follows.

I. CARELESS LOVE

on my way to Arété I saw
the heron fly just right

"all right all right all right"
I thought

and I did stay with her
all night

•

lamp-
light on her face

above mine

•

her slave stumbled & broke
the cup so we drank from a

bucket I had the first drink
then Arété downed the rest

•

baked goods from Amathusa
bread from Cyprus a bucket

of honey (a gift from the flower-
eaters) sweet Rhodian

ointment a garland of damson
flowers & mint aahh mmm

pierced the stopper
with a thin tube

•

soothed
my nostrils

(peanut oil)

•

greased
my keel

•

her lips
voracious

as a heron's beak

•

I love you more than I
love anyone else I swear

this to you by this
head of cabbage

•

silky
slit

•

stepping
proudly

like an
arch-

necked
horse

•

o but why did you take to your bed
that asshole Bupalos?

•

man carved out of stone

•

threatens to render me senseless

•

told them to punch Hipponax in the mouth
told them to throw rocks at Hipponax

•

got away thanks to the seven-
leaf cabbage (Pandora's offering

at the Thargelia before *she* copped it)

•

here hang on to my shirt
while I bop Bupalos right

in the eye for I am ambi-
dextrous and my aim is

perfect

•

thought it was him
so let him have it

•

ripped his cloak
slashed him
down the middle

•

she rents out her tongue
for eighty bucks

•

you want him?
I'll let you have him

dirt-cheap

•

her nose a bell
with snot for a clapper

why bother to wrap it up
(it isn't fresh partridge, exactly)

•

another game?
with those loaded dice?

you must be kidding

•

no more warming your
chilblains at my embers

•

so fooling The In-Bred of Erythrea
Bupalos feeds at the trough

(Aréte
beside him)

•

then they shrieked at each other

•

hips out of whack
no teeth only one eye

she sure knows how to pick 'em

•

may Artemis strike you down
or Apollo

(I don't care)

II. WHAT A MOB

when they catch Phrygians
the Soloeci sell them to Miletus

where they need slaves for their mills

•

what a mob

•

was that a fart or a croak?

•

they dribble
like a sieve

•

Kikon you hideous glutton son
of Amythaon your head may be

crowned with bay-leaves but your
forecast doesn't look good

•

starve him and whip his gonads
pelt him with rocks in the meadow

beat him with twigs like a scapegoat

•

hold it Mimnes I don't think it is
such a good idea to paint the snake

on the side of the trireme with its
tail at the prow its head at the stern

if the snake bites his leg the brawny
helmsman will roar "count me out"

•

galloping upsidedown you lay there
after she snipped the cord

•

sing Muse of Mrs. Eurymedontiades
who needs no cutlery to wolf her food

shout Rabble vote for her death by stoning
by the Sea ever-restless

•

a hypocrite
the judge who condemned you
a paterfamilias
smirking at whores

with three witnesses he returned
to the bootlegger's place and found

a man who having no broom was busy
sweeping the floor with a broomstick

•

then she said in a strange tongue
now I'll clean your disgusting

asshole she beat me with twigs
like a scapegoat caught between

two boards I hung above dung
beetles came to the feast

•

(handy invective)

one who barfs at the feast
old sow fed on slops

cow-pie's sister
Ephesian porker

bag of puréed squid

III. SCREECH SCREECH HERE COME THE GHOSTS (OR, "PEOPLE WHO DIED")

screech screech
here come the ghosts

•

Myson whom Apollo
called the wisest of all

•

pillaged along the road to Smyrna
through Lydia past the burrow of Alyattes

past Gyges' grave mound past
Ardys' splendid slab and Sadyattes' tomb

the mighty conqueror
his belly pointing west

•

his chariot powered by white stallions from Thrace
he charged the walls of Troy and was slain

•

a better judge than Bias from Priene

•

bright Cybebe
Bendis from Thrace

daughters of Zeus

•

he lived in Smyrna
the wrong side of town

halfway to Hades

•

and how did he get to Kypsos

•

libations and innards of a wild sow

•

black fig-tree
sister of the vine

•

clean cock and balls

•

happy the hunter

•

IV. STILL WAITING FOR MY WINTER COAT

called on Hermes
strangler of dogs

brother of thieves
a.k.a. Kandaules

(in Scythia):
PLEASE HELP ME OUT

•

ah. . .to wear a mantle
of mountain sheep's wool. . .

•

Hermes lord of Cyllene
great son of Maia

Hipponax begs you:
send me a winter coat

for I am starving

•

unfunny he who drinks his lunch

•

now that was good advice

•

last night while I lay sleeping
someone made off with my clothes

lay in a room on a pallet buck-naked

•

o teeth
you

who used to reside
in my jaw

•

picked tarragon out of a dented bucket
hands shook trembled

like the toothless
when the north wind blows

•

Zeus
Emperor of Olympus

Big Daddy

•

no scrumptious feast of partridge and hare
no sesame pancakes

no fritters drenched
in honey

no yummy Lebedian figs
from far-off Kamandolos

•

to Hipponax:

1 coat
1 shirt

1 pair of sandals
1 pair of winter shoes

(and 60 gold bars
to hide in the wall)

•

still waiting for my great shaggy coat
to keep me from freezing in winter

and for that pair of winter shoes
to save my poor feet from chilblains

•

Pluto must have gone blind
he's never found his way to my house to tell me

"greetings dear Hipponax
see here I brought you this bag of silver"

•

o great Athena
please grant me a gentle master

one who won't beat me

•

I bow to Hermes
wait for the sun to rise

in his bright shirt

GEORGE **ECONOMOU**

from William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (The C-Text)

Now Glutton heads for confession
And moves towards the Church, his *mea culpa* to say.
Fasting on a Friday he made forth his way
By the house of Betty Brewer, who bid him good morning
And where was he going that brew-wife asked.
"To holy Church," he said, "to hear mass,
And then sit and be shriven and sin no more."
"I have good ale, Glutton, old buddy, want to give it a try?"
"Do you have," he asked, "any hot spices?"
"I have pepper, peony, and a pound of garlic,
A farthing-worth of fennel seed, for fasting days I bought it."
Then in goes Glutton and great oaths after.
Cissy the shoemaker sat on the bench,
Wat the game-warden and his drunken wife,
Tim the tinker and two of his workmen,
Hick the hackney-man and Hugh the needler,
Clarice of Cock's Lane and the clerk of the church,
Sir Piers of Pridie and Purnel of Flanders,
A hayward, a hermit, the hangman of Tyburn
Daw the ditchdigger and a dozen rascals
In the form of porters and pick-pockets and bald tooth-pullers,
A fiddler, a rat-catcher, a street-sweeper and his helper,
A rope-maker, a road-runner, and Rose the dish-seller,
Godfrey the garlic-man and Griffeth the Welshman,
And a heap of second-hand salesmen, early in the morning
Stood Glutton with glad cheers to his first round of ale.
Clement the cobbler took off his cloak
And put it up for a game of New Fair.
Hick the hackney-man saw with his hood
And asked Bart the butcher to be on his side.

Tradesmen were chosen to appraise this bargain,
That who-so had the hood should not have the cloak,
And that the better thing, according to the arbiters, compensate
[the worse.
They got up quickly and whispered together
And appraised these items apart in private,
And there was a load of swearing, for one had to get the worse.
They could not in conscience truthfully accord
Till Robin the rope-maker they asked to arise
And named him umpire so that all arguing would stop.
Hick the hostler got the cloak
On condition that Clement should fill the cup
And have Hick the hostler's hood and rest content;
And whoever took it back first had to get right up
And greet Sir Glutton with a gallon of ale.
There was laughing and louring and "please pass the cup!"
Bargaining and drinking they kept starting up
And sat so till evensong, and sang from time to time,
Until Glutton had gobbled down a gallon and a gill.
His guts began to rumble like two greedy sows;
He pissed half a gallon in the time of a *pater-noster,*
He blew his round bugle at his backbone's bottom,
So that all that heard that horn had to hold their noses
And wished it had been well plugged with a wisp of briars.
He could neither step nor stand unless he held a staff,
And then he moved like a minstrel's performing dog,
Sometimes sideways and sometimes backwards,
Like some one laying lines in order to trap birds.
And when he reached the door, then his eyes dimmed,
And he stumbled on the threshold and fell to the ground,
And Clement the cobbler grabbed him by the waist
And in order to lift him up set him on his knees.
But Glutton was a huge boor and troubled in the lifting
And barfed up a mess into Clement's lap;
There is no hound so hungry in Hertfordshire
That he'd dare lap up that leaving, so unlovely it smacked.
With all the woe in this world his wife and his maid
Bore him to his bed and put him in it,
And after all this excess he had a bout of sloth;

He slept through Saturday and Sunday till sundown.
Then he awoke pale and wan and wanted a drink;
The first thing he said was "Who's got the bowl?"
His wife and his conscience reproached him for his sin;
He became ashamed, that scoundrel, and made quick confession
To Repentance like this: "Have pity on me," he said,
"Thou Lord that art aloft and shape all that lives!
To thee God, I, Glutton, acknowledge my guilt
Of how I've trespassed with tongue, how often I can't tell,
Sworn 'God's soul and his sides!' and 'So help me God, Almighty!'
There was no need for it so many times falsely;
And over-ate at supper and sometime at noon
More than my system could naturally handle,
And like a dog that eats grass I began to throw up
And wasted what I might have saved—I can't speak for my shame
Of the depravity of my foul mouth and maw—
And on fasting-days before noon I fed myself ale
Beyond all reason, among dirty jokesters, their dirty jokes to hear.
Hereof, good God, grant me forgiveness
For all my worthless living during my entire life-time.
For I swear by the true God, despite any hunger or thirst,
Never shall on Friday a piece fish digest in my stomach
Till my aunt Abstinence has given me leave—
And yet I've hated her all my life-time."

Millstone

Worms in the corn
it almost always was
aperture, each vivid laborer
all the commons in any case
a clerk was called forward.
Iron, granite or diamond
umbrage, the same dull round
a mill with wheels, pain and travail
rain and wind in the fields
en Engleterre de anno in annum
in England year after year
issi destrure le poverail
crushing the poor
pondus per amarum
under a heavy load.
Terms of tenure
tenants must render
that sow the meadows
carry hay to the granges
acknowledge bondage
no unconditional allowance
made, *operarius*, or workmen

songewarie (dream interpreting)
wage and largesse
indentured surplus, famine,
revolt and the falling away
of illusions, step deafening
declarative free will
when the work hour calls you
the two or three or four of you
confederation and alliance
". . .they have withdrawn
and continue to withdraw
customs and services due. . ."
But who could have been there
as if in a book
tanquam pro speculo
(hard thought window)
and not have seen
the ears of corn ripening?
It is the casualness of the allusion to the commons
falling on the ground
en my les blees
more than the groan
that rose out of them
when they see the head
of their leader on a pole
in the *Anonimalle,*
the only chronicle
to mention the corn,

incommensurable,
in Clerkenwell fields
on a late June day in 1381.
When at last I took my pen in hand
and eat
from the book
that I already am
the rural origin
of the larger portion
forebearing burden
of a broken will and grinding
the fruit of that forbidden
Tree (called *Imago-dei*)
otherwise Trewe-love
at the bottom of a buttercup
at the bottom of the bitter cup
the ruth of the woman debating
when her bitter tears were biting
that all things on the earth belong in common.
On a May morning
all but equivalent
to Once Upon A Time
I put on rough cloth
a rough outer garment
arrayed, the phrase
y shop me generally meaning
"I got myself ready" as in
"he got ready to set off"

as if referring to the faith
of a Lollard
or this rough
bandied haste
both song and
kept from it
shapeless hut
(had left on the feast
of the translation of it)
tynyng: wasting
reule: space
in the room
between bed
and wall ("to
rise to the
reule to rokke
the cradle")
wonyen: dwell
hous-huyre
(house rent)
afyngred:
oppressed by
and been abashed
for to beg
papelotes: porridge
gurles: children
aglotye: fill
the bellies of

ne carpen: nor speak
twelve pence on a sack
of wool exacted
dialect, lights dart.

This Fathering Shadow (A Note on "A" and *Piers Plowman*)

For a long time I used to read the post-war movements of "A" in search of some form of a return to and continuing the successively wide and inclusive and densely concentrated sound and figuration made under the sign of Labor, both for the doctrine and the music there, that make "A"-8 and "A"-9 unlike anything I have found, having found or having been found and having sharply felt that loss noted by Michael Palmer which appears, in the time of the writing of "A"-11, "as an act of mourning for the century." ("On Objectivism," *Sulfur* 26). The impasse where the poem is thought to have no further bearing on a political world is registered by the silence into which Marx and Marxism disappear, events such as the Moscow Trials, Spain, and the Berlin-Moscow pact having overtaken and relegated to profoundly ambivalent status the one phase of a work whose strange urgency it had been to inscribe consciousness of class and proletarian desire in time. And yet, there is a twelve line passage towards the end of "A"-23 where Zukofsky is folding in a resemblance and rhyming "A" with a late 14th century work, *Piers Plowman*, which survives in three redactions called the A, B, and C texts, and his brief notational derivation, really something of a compressed translation of the Prologue to the anterior poem, perhaps jotted from memory, though introduced or marked by *firste fader*—inflecting lineage, the language of fathers—overcomes this threatening frame by opening back, in the act of copying, and remembering one book in particular wrought in an allegory and torment of real events. The proximity of *Piers Plowman* to its own day was such that the hardly literal or mimetic figure from which the poem takes its name was actually included in a list of conspirators promulgated by the royal courts in the aftermath of the Peasants' Revolt. This in addition to obvious borrowings from *Piers Plowman* embedded in the coded language of letters whose English, as one scholar has remarked, weirdly invades the authoritative French and Latin of the chronicles that quote them, serve as a reminder that

among all that has been forgotten there is this still critically important first inscription, the appropriation of passages from the poem by clerks on the side of the commons' rising. The author, William Langland, about whom next to nothing is known but "whose whole life appears to have been a continuous act of composition," may even have produced the third (C) version in reaction against this reading, given the suppression of certain passages where the Plowman's rage appears consonant with explicable acts of violence that were committed in the course of the revolt. Langland, like Milton a doctrinal poet, may also have wanted to distance his book from the Church heresies advanced by John Wyclif and the social radicalism of the propertyless priests called Lollards that followed his teachings. The broadest contour of what was happening—the breaking apart of the feudal estate by force of a burgeoning market economy and developing ideological struggle that would claim the head of a future king—is evident from a passage in *Areopagetica* where "the divine and admirable spirit of Wyclif" is seen as not merely preceding but progenitive of the resounding names of Luther and Calvin. (The official condemnation of Wyclif's teachings took place in 1382, a year after the revolt). If interpretations of the past are to occur without consolidation in the name and once-enabling identifications upon which concepts of class and class-struggle have come to depend, then I would write in the margins of successive editions, translations and volumes of exegesis of a poem that has emerged from ruins of manuscripts after six centuries—reciting the permutations of an event, manifold appearances and reappearances, the disappearance of an event, rather then return to the troubled problem of whether and when writing can represent them.

Pasts

Not the past. The *pasts*.

The fatal singular. It is not less than tragic that we have allowed those "Divisions of Knowledge" to be called History, Philosophy. Compare the openness of Physics, Politics, Mathematics—no implication that there is just one of them, one right-one of them, one only to be found. Sciences open to the flourishes of discovery.

The fatal singular. Our society has been haunted by, tormented by, monotheism. And all the pale ghosts of the *monotheos:* right here comes the cult of the Masterpiece, the myth of the Major Author, monarchy along with the modern sovereign nation-state that inherits monarchy's totalitarian ethos. In our day the monotheos is reincarnated as the Self. The singular Self, strangest of all our aberrations. The Self, whose cult or worship is a greedy web of Entitlements. Whose claim is war.

Never let schools and scholars talk about history. At worst, talk about Histories. At best, Investigations into the Roots and Branches of things.

The monarch is one visible aspect of the tree. The monotheos is one conceivable aspect of the real. Let them arrogate no further privilege.

Whereas:

our pasts are multifarious as dreams
our pasts speak in all tongues

our pasts impeach the shallow testimony of the single sense
our pasts impeach the shallow doctrine of the fact

our pasts free us from false identities
free us from the posturing of class and race.

It is only with the single squint of history, el tuerto, that we blundered into a belief in nationality and racial purity.

History has burnt more cities than crime ever did

the sense of a privileged past

the sense of a privileged past
pushing "us" on.

There is hope:
The invention of pasts is the most delicious art of our century.

We don't have to wait for Borges to invent Tlön. Our pasts throng with Lyonesses, Otherwheres, Ailleurs, Anywhere Out of The World. And they are reliable, as reliable as Freeman on William Rufus or Trevor Roper on Hitler. More so. They *invent with an inner conviction* that our historians—no Investigators, they—are too ashamed to feel, let alone rely upon.

Robert Duncan talked about one of the many obligations (which are also permissions) of the Young Poet as the Invention of one's own Horoscope. The choice of grandparents—*l'invention des aieux.*

Ordinarily, folk let themselves be trapped in their "own" horoscope, i.e., the designs of their Natal Daemon.

To invent our pasts. *(Invenire* in Latin, of course, means both what we mean by its derivative-"make up"—and also discover —in the sense of to find what is already there). We will be caught in that fertile ambiguity forever. I hope.

The Young Poet, too, is the woman without a past, who with the blazing light of her imagining obliterates the shadows of those who precede her. The Young Poet inherits a tradition of dispensing with tradition. That is his secret, his horror, his duty, his risk.

So I suppose what this issue of PastS must be intended to do is to make up some more antecedents, the ones who came before us without our knowledge, who stole upon us from the past when we were finally ready to see them. (The surrealists were not produced by Lautréamont; the Lautréamont we know was created by the surrealists. The future creates the past—everybody always knew that.)

The Young Poet creates all the necessary (because possible) histories of poetry. Pound can imagine into some single context Arnaut Daniel and the Earl of Rochester and Sappho and Li Po and call that, somehow, his paideuma or gnonom or fixèd mark. Breton can banish the classics and *académiciens* into the junkyard billboarded **NE LISEZ PAS** and make up a new Canon from the servitors of dream, the golden failures, the children of the night mewling half-incomprehensible images. And this canon serves us better than the tired gentlemen it replaces.

So in speaking to these issues of pasts, I claim no privilege other than my own inventory of real or imagined or wishful motherings.

One does not want to live in a world that was not created by Bellini and Mother Teresa and Milarepa and Blake and Reich and Sappho and Hoelderlin and all the wielders of the long song—Taliesin, she who was Homer, limp Virgil, Vyasa the Many, Valmiki the One, Spenser the Copious, Coleridge the Spent, Tennyson who hides in speech, Beckett who shouts in silence, and Gertrude Stein who is the waker of the dawn, the same slow morning we still are trying to understand,

the morning of language into which we have almost awakened.

And it is back there, in the pasts, that powers wait to be put to service.

Homer, not blind. Not blind but a woman. The incurable wound of gender shows in her every image, every kindness, her even-handedness, Homer, mother of Greeks, mother of Trojans.

When the center is dead, every valuable thing is eccentric.

When the center is dead, we must flee to the eccentric, the periphery where life waits.

Isn't that what the modernists were saying? Isn't that what your heart says when you stand in a bookselling superstore watching the displays of samenesses proliferate?

When the center is dead, we flee to William Diaper and Quirinus Kühlmann and Sheridan LeFanu and Matthew Shiel and Sidney Lanier (whose very name has been dropped from such "public record" as the Harvard History of American Literature provides, but whose "Marshes of Glynn" haunt the mind still of many American poets, and whose measures, nuttier than Whitman's, recur in Jeffers and Duncan). Beddoes can help us, and Gilbert

Le Compte and Robert Barlow and Philip Lamantia and Stephen Jonas and Weldon Kees.

Maybe we will finally cure ourselves through the mad permissions of the non-standard, the non-scheduled theologies (Lenny Bruce called them) of Africa and Asia, the permissions of the obsolete, the archaic, the temporary, the unacceptable, the lost, the damned, the media-forgotten, the extra-curricular, the absurd,

as "serious" music somehow cured itself of the stultifying paralysis of will (in music, will is melody) we grew up with in the aridities of the Second Viennese School,

cured itself by the crazy romantics and the endless eccentricities of Bruckner and Strauss and Mahler, Mahler whose rebirth should make forever clear the profound *eccentricity* of Beethoven (say, as compared to Spontini and Cherubini of the conservatories) and Bach.

And I still think Gertrude Stein is about the only writer we had who made sense.

Rather than offering opinions. She had no opinions, she had only the power to make sense happen.

The pasts are full of risks. These risks are what I want to bring you.

CESAR **VALLEJO**

At Baudelaire's Tomb

(Tr. by Eliot Weinberger)

Paris, May 1928

In the cemetery of Montparnasse the anniversary of the death of Charles Baudelaire was commemorated. The scene was an aesthetic kidney stew with a simplicity that was almost vegetable.

The ceremony took place in front of the monument to the poet, one of the most beautiful sepulchral stones in Paris. Its meaning is literal and direct, yet, at the same time, it is quite original. The sculptor has taken an enormous block of stone, split it in half, and given it the form of a compass. This is the skeleton of the monument. A compass. An airplane, one of whose wings drags at great length on the ground. Like the symbolic albatross. The other half of the stone rises perpendicularly behind to present, near the top, a great bat with extended wings. Above this living, floating creature, rests a gargoyle whose hands hold a chin that is pensive, vigilant, almost aggressive.

Another sculptor would have chiselled, instead of a bat, the heraldic cat of the bards. But this sculptor chipped deeper into the stone and chose the bat, that zoological binomial, between mammal and bird, that ethic image—between Lucifer and angel—that incarnates so perfectly the spirit of Baudelaire. For the author of *Les Fleurs du mal* was not diabolical in the Catholic sense of the word, but was rather the raised sum of those two large and inseparable figures: rebellion and innocence. Rebellion is not possible without innocence. Only children and angels rebel. Evil never rebels. Show me an old man who rebels. It would be impossible. An old man can only grow resentful and bitter, he can't rebel. Like Voltaire. Rebellion is the fruit of an innocent spirit. And the cat carries evil between his paws.

In contrast, the bat—the flying mouse of the crypts, that hybrid piece of the soffits—has the instinct for height and, at the same time, for darkness. Its realm is the dark kingdom, yet it inhabits the copulas. From its double nature—flight and darkness—one could say that it possesses the wisdom of the shadows, and one could say that it falls upwards. . .

It was there, then, in front of this authentic cathedral stone and this reverent crowd, that Gustave Kahn spoke of the cult of the great artists of

the world, among whom, he said, Baudelaire occupies an eminent position. M. Valmi Baysee then talked about the growing influence of Baudelaire on foreign literatures.

Some women from the general public and actresses from the Comédie Française and the Odeon recited the poet's verse, intoning a scene of ineffable, human and living color, communicating a simplicity of free and natural trance, stripped of the airs of societies and chapels.

The contralto voice of an actress spoke "L'Étranger." Another recited, with an fluidity that was truly moving, "L'Invitation au Voyage." M. Alexandre gave a supreme declamation of "Danse Macabre," and M. Lambert another, no less captivating, of "La Mort des Amants."

The group to the rear broke up by the side of the statue "Souvenir." On the leafless avenues, the wind remained behind, singing, in two silences, its silence.

WILL **ALEXANDER**

Charles Fourier: Spark of the Harmonian Lightning Wheel

> The next revolutionary wave, if it is to achieve sufficient power and breadth, must be a synthesis of all previous ideas, and must unite, into one cohering mass, all the "ghosts."
> —Kenneth White on Charles Fourier

Like a phantom under the smoke of a splintered kerosene chrysalis, there is the image of Charles Fourier weaving his trenchant solstice needles from a spiral of sonorous vapor and jade. And with a jagged marmoset lisping by his side, and a penetrant crystalline stylus spinning in his fingers, he emits the power to calculate beatific bodily fields and heresy. And by bodily fields I mean the openness, the perfect right and honor of pleasure, and by heresy, I mean the seasoning of his journey with alchemical hissing and turbulence against civil fraud and disorder.

So it is, that Fourier seizes us with fire and the ecstasy of dreaming. The bird with its flaming thermal escape into a powerful uranian clairaudience, alive with syncopation and stillness. The utopian endeavor condensed in this image inspired by the writer with the hand of thirst, who opened 19th century thought to "Phalanxes," who cast passion into a higher realm of scarlet, into another register of vibration, wholly above the principles of shattering and panic. Here one found the fire restored to a pelican's rested armor, a shellfish resurrected by internal summas of greenness. He superseded reason, and merged the separations through "variety and . . .change," and created in the process an anti-transfixture, thereby transmuting psychic arthritics by the a-priori action of God, spawned in the fire of the senses.

If, given a utopian radical optics, one could magically trace the movements of diphthong gazelles, or place in the beam of one's brilliance a destiny of dreaming cobra-striped zebras. The aforementioned, quite in keeping with Fourier's ramblings conducted at an inward pitch, with the power to pursue its own powers at the level of an invisible and self-sustaining orbit. A mind Breton described with "a pre-eminent gift for

reason and a taste for vaticination." A mind, unlike the timing of the nunnery, that was able to envision "swing-carts. . .in the castle of cherry gardeners" by means of a ferocious imaginal breathing. A world, a Harmonian blend, where each specific action remained unconstrained to "duty"; where isolation was broken down and the combined effects of the passions merged into an over-gathering of momentum, a supremely positive momentum. To him, no moral surgery was applicable, no philanthropic apogee was embodied, cooling the heat of life with a topical monument of reason. Labor for him was an act of pleasure, an act of nobility, a poem of fantastic enticement. An atmosphere without "envy," or "jealousy," or acts of repressive sublimation. The collective was the power with its marvelous abolition of regressive motor resistance, thereby engendering the primal elixir within the cerulean terrain of the vivifying portion.

As a young clerk "at Marseilles" he is transmogrified by the pitching of "rice" into the sea. He forever turns against rancid speculation, and the "commercial" psychosis which spawned it. It was decisive; the individual need no longer live at the behest of contrived abysses, tainted by aggressive structural stagnation. For him, the wind began to live again with the force of aboriginal burning, and the sun was colored green again by the free "astronomers of Asia."

So, from this unobstructed nerve arose attractional passion, no longer subject to the blinding stains of the social order. The latter always seeking devices of grit and disorder, where blood was extracted by rapacious plesiosaur's mechanics. A vile, unending impasse, stained by abbreviated fuels of misfortune. A system of profit which corroded renewal. For Fourier, the antidote was the lifting of water from minerals so as to test the true variety of the spectrum. The beauty of nopal, or an aerial herd of eagles, became part of a sensuous, unceasing inventiveness. In contra-distinction, there was the civilized moat where arson was waged against the throat and the skin, so that the body was held hostage within the blackened methodology of the furnace. A starkness inscribed by linear in-variety, by a smoke-filled psyche without rubies or lightning. The body rotted, the soul wavered, the spirit was excluded. The pedestal of regularity formed a desultory pinnacle of stability. The worker was constantly rewarded for the same arthritic facility, day after spectrumless day. So Fourier proposed nuance and intrigue, the two-hour work day, the revolving discussion and interchange of ideas. There was no longer the projected pheromone of hostility, the mental pillage of the blindfolded task. He annulled the hordes of "fiscal" armies producing unripened fragments for dictatorial consumption. And he knew the constant blood ache, and the seal of repression.

Society was no more than a snake, slipping across one's shoulders, leaving shallow wounds of poison, which allowed one to live, which

refused to one's body the simple comfort of death. There was only living for the daily wage, the constant exposure to supreme axial barbarity.

He was witness to this miserable zenith, with its macro-confusion of empire announcing a call to arms with a flaccid and disintegrating bugle. A bugle which Fourier saw as a call which arrested, which stunted, which institutionally inverted. And it was no more to him than "the latest of our scientific chimeras." A "crab" conducting sound with a meandering and parasitical rhapsodics. He proceeded to depict from this alarm the parasitic nature in bold poetic relief. First, the "incoherent" family unit with its activity of tedious trauma, brought on by the fact of "industrial division," which simultaneously proceeded from the "separated household." A life innately feeble, like a pictographic mud leash, without the variety and flair of an interactive tension. Then there were the sadistic codifications of the "ARMIES," and the "MERCHANTS," and the "spies," all reduced to a practical insignificance, in that they remained idle when not productive in their respective negativities. He scrutinized the "agents of transportation" who, he reported, through "their ignorance and improvidence increase the number of shipwrecks tenfold." Of course, the plummeted "quality" of the "MANUFACTURERS" was disturbing, they who engaged the power of a duplicitous and hypothetical excellence, supported by a dire, but ubiquitous juridical folly.

Fourier contended that the power of attractive labor would supersede the necessity of such crime as it existed at the core of parasitical dysfunction. He compiled data on top of data concerning the resistives of these dysfunctional wolverines, empowered within the scope of drudgery and want. What followed was his central insight concerning the lack of living desire, the condensed and unarguable brutality, which created an inevitable abstention from labor. "If the master is out of sight," he observed, "the laborers stop; if they see a man or cat pass, all are in a stir, masters and servants leaning upon their spades. . .gazing in order to divert themselves."

Life in this context was no more than an exhaustive famine, an exercise for imbibing venom. Yes, it was a testament to unerring disfigurement, to a task of searing taboos and consignments. Fourier himself bemoaned his designation as "commercial traveller," like an ironical fish conjoined by bony sand diluents. Nevertheless, he engaged the air of liberation, condemning the economics of his life span as limited to the "analysis of existing evil." By its tacit passivity, he saw that this discipline empowered extortion, made do with depravity. He roundly condemned its abstract optical glances concerning the Irish hunger of 1826. And its natural lack of antidote he abhorred. The apologists of his era like Dugald Stewart, or M.J.B. Say, he classified as authors of sophistry, and extollers of anguish. Hunger for the authorities was nothing but a cunning technical drama, where one could sort out and contain the controlling points. And here we

get to his fundamental dissidence against the middle men; their extorting, their sowing of "disorder" at the core of exchange. The producer and the consumer blunted, kept apart and placed on a permanent footing of rivalry. The general good was never the goal. And Fourier brilliantly chronicled this generic malevolence, when the physician was seen as wishing his fellow citizens "genuine cases of fever," the architect psychologically courting multiple conflagrations, with the courts of justice skillfully vitalized by crime. Nothing more then legalized disruptions, contrived pecuniary motifs, based upon a model of obligatory dishonor.

In contrast, within Fourier's Harmonian world, axial monotony was broken and transmuted by the inward rotation of pleasure. And for Fourier, this pleasure was an a-priori given, an instinctual testament, untainted by mirages. For him it expressed our original unity as living beings, our primeval dispensation from the power from on high. The restraint, the peculiarity of segregation, is only a rational and subsequent contrivance. Therefore he knew that the civil life was maimed by a lack of variety, by a lack of surreptitious flow and inspiration. The social-body suffers with nothing but bread, with the delights of the body, and the palate condemned. Analogy is reduced to doubt, and copulation commences in a furnace of snares.

In his world of Harmonian ardor, he knew the sparks of attraction would electrically adhere to an honor. And that honor was variety, so fruitfully exemplified by the butterfly flitting across a splendiferous array of nectars. Labor will last for no more than two hours, with verbal exchange across all regions of difference. The upper and the lower, the lighter and the darker, brought into harmonious confluence. From the cradle throughout life monotony was excluded, replaced by the nuance and refinement of consumption.

The result was a utopian colored being, a spectrum colored being, drinking from a chalice of indigo and saffron. A gorgeous roundelay of balance where the being was infused with the savvy of intrigue. The subtext inspired by a contradictory spikenard. As if the whole collective were invested by a magnified divination, able to meander, and asymmetrically collect jade from a dune, and build from their findings a palace, capable of changing its visual and aural congruence, through the different shadings in the moments of the day. The cherry pickers, the lovers, the gardeners, the abstractionists, entering and re-entering the magic of its confines, all of one action, playing with the fire of a-priori being.

And Fourier, who struck the first pure seed of utopia, imbibed the primal ray, the aboriginal utterance, and transmitted its spark, which turned the lightning wheel, the Harmonian lightning wheel, with its riveting assessment, with its circular attainment of openness and feeding.

ALLEN S. **WEISS**

The Theater of Possession

Here the theater exists at the place of the skull.
—Valère Novarina

Build an altar, and a god shall appear. The possessed of Morzine had the genius (following the ancient tradition of sorcery) to present their bodies as altars, hoping for the apparition of the devil, which in turn would necessitate the intervention of God in all His grace. Desire for God, or for the devil, that great dissimulator, thus the model for all actors? In either case, they were, alas, inspired too late in history for the devil, and too early for the theater.

The story began on the Ides of March 1857, in the Savoyard town of Morzine.* Just before her first communion, ten-year-old Péronne witnessed a terrifying event: she saw a little girl of her village fished out of the freezing waters in which she almost drowned. The day after, in class, Péronne fell, as if dead, and didn't revive for three hours. The fits continued, especially in church, and Péronne was joined in her torments by a little girl with whom she went out to the pastures to herd the goats. Soon their fits would take another form, that of demonic possession: they remained immobile, eyes turned towards the heavens, arms offered up high. The events took an even more dramatic turn: the girls would assume the gestures of reading a letter: according to the imagined contents, they were transported either to heaven or to hell. Later, the crisis became even more distressing: screams, curses, spasms, contortions, clairvoyance. . .

Fairy tale or historical event? To the townsfolk of Morzine, the nature of this crisis was clear: Péronne and her friend were victims of demonic possession. Perhaps the cause of it all was the crone who touched Péronne on the shoulder one day as she left school. . .The possession was contagious, and soon became epidemic: between 1857 and 1873, nearly half the women of Morzine (as well as several men) were similarly

*See Catherine-Laurence Maire, *Les possédées de Morzine* (Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1981).

possessed, a bewitchment (*endiablement*) characterized by convulsions, superhuman agility, speaking in tongues, blasphemy, prophesy.

Morzine was in the grips of a historical crisis: newly annexed by France and in the throes of a demographic shift which had the majority of its male population leave town to find work elsewhere, the women of this poor mountain community created a culture unto themselves, within the limits of a strict religious consciousness. The possession, revealing the inner contradictions of a failing social order beyond the threshold of despair, would become a *cause célèbre* in France. Morzine would find itself caught between a modern church whose system of belief had little room for the traditional Morzinois culture and the scientific rationalism of the state. Caught in the double-bind of history and theology, these women responded in the tongues of angels and the bodies of devils. The citizens of Morzine wanted the devil exorcized at all cost, even though initial efforts in this direction were fruitless; the Vatican vacillated, not wishing to authenticate a case of demonic possession, insisting that faith in God would suffice; the state called in the military, political and medical establishments, as if to crush a rebellion. Finally, the possessed were "exiled" to hospitals in neighboring cities, and all manifestations of possession were outlawed.

Indeed, by May 1861, the town came under minute scrutiny: not only did every case of possession have to be reported to the authorities, but everybody was obliged to refer to the ailment as "hystéro-demonopathique," thus indicating the psychopathological, and not the theological, origin of the events. In these mere few years, the ancient cultural identity of Morzine was shattered, and for the first time in France medical authorities triumphed over the church in a case of demoniacal possession. The tale may be told by a chronological declension of terms: *possession démoniaque, démonomanie, hystero-démonopathie épidémique, hystérie.* From *démonomanie* to *érotomanie*, from faith to madness, the devil's work would ultimately be rationalized and thus effaced by this century's science, culminating in Charcot's iconographic classification of the gestures of hysteria at La Salpetriere in Paris.

The powers of rationalization, medicalization and politicization wished to crush the faith of the Morzinois; the collective memories, beliefs and desires of this community were reinterpreted in terms of individual, subjective passions; the manifestations of an oral religious tradition were transformed into psychosomatic symptoms. The desperate women of Morzine—for the most part unlettered and without public voice—utilized the extreme possibilities of language and gesture to express their pains and desires in a society on its way to dissolution. For their part, the medical establishment used these same voices and acts, captured in a very different hermeneutic web, to authenticate and develop their own discourse and

aggrandize their own powers, not to mention their often unsublimated passions.

"No, I shall not leave this woman made in the image of God." These words—spoken in Morzine in the year 1857, the very moment in which Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* was condemned—were perhaps the last words the devil would pronounce in the French language. The event marked a true drama in the French language, a dystopian moment at the origins of our modernism. The *Malleus Maleficarum* informs us of one case of demonic possession where 100,000 devils were successfully exorcized; in Morzine, not a single devil would be chased away.

With the continuing suppression in the 19th century of the great religious and popular festivals, the forms and passions of these collective events would become interiorized in the psyche, to reappear in dream images, neurotic symptoms, hysterical gestures and psychotic deliria. These very symptoms would soon be appropriated by modernist poetics, marking a rupture in the history of poetry as well as a new epistemological crisis. Modernist literary interest in the "psychopathology" of language was foreshadowed by one of the rationalist reactions to the possession of Morzine; wishing to rationalize and ridicule the phenomenon, a certain Dr. Andrevetan wrote a didactic pastoral drama entitled *Les Possédées de Morzine* (Genève, 1861). Though written in a totally different spirit, this work predates by a half a century the researches of the Moscow Linguistic Circle, inspired by the young poet-linguist Roman Jakobson, establishing the creative and scientific interest in the poetics and theatrics of aberrant and pathological linguistic formations.

Perhaps most striking among such effects is glossolalia, speaking in tongues; a rhapsody of Divine, or often demonic, inspiration. This unmediated expression is language inscribed in its excess, the manifestation of a pure signifier where the word no longer functions as determinable signification, but takes on a fully gestural, dramatic sense. In glossolalia, language is primarily informed by the body, and signs are guided by the libido: such enunciations evince a passional, often erotic quality in their very rhythm, harmony, euphony, and even in their dissonance and cacophony.

Such linguistic transformations were typical of the possessed Morzinoise; they would also not be out of place in the Théâtre de la Cruauté of Artaud, the Ontological-Hysterical Theater of Richard Foreman, the dreamlike creations of Robert Wilson, or the Théâtre des Paroles of Valère Novarina. From demonology to pathology to poetics to theater; from the enunciations of the devil to the histrionics of hysterics to the theatralizations of high modernism: ruse of the devil? or of language? or of the body?

OCTAVIO **PAZ**

The Stone Rainbow

(Tr. by Eliot Weinberger)

The difference between time *here* and time *there*—*there* meaning the other world, or simply the interior world of sleep and dreaming—has been a topic in all civilizations. A blink of the eye in Paradise is equal to a human century; a Brahma day is 2,190,000,000 years on earth; during the persecutions of the emperor Decius (249-251) the Seven Sleepers slept a dreamless sleep in a cave in Ephesus and did not awake until the reign of Theodosius II (408-450); at an elegant reception Swann listened for half an hour to a sonata by Vinteuil, and those few minutes were enough to revive him from his misery and to recognize the banality of his life. The theme is universal, but the Asian versions, besides being more numerous, are remarkable for two qualities that, in this case, are not mutually exclusive: fantasy and profundity.

In China there is a legend that reduces to human—though no less astonishing—terms the vastness of the cosmological dreams and metaphysics of India. According to Arthur Waley, the first version of this legend is *The Pillow Tale* by Li Pi (722-789). In Japan there is a beautiful and disturbing Noh play, attributed to Zeami, that takes this theme and gives it a poetic truthfulness, which is the only kind of truthfulness that literature can tolerate. The play is called *Kantan*, and Waley himself wrote an English translation that, like nearly all his work, is excellent. The story can be told in a few lines: a young man who has left his village in search of his fortune arrives at an inn, where he meets an old wanderer; the old man lends him a pillow to rest on while the innkeeper cooks a little rice; the boy stretches out on a mat, leaning his head on the pillow, and falls asleep; he dreams that he has entered the imperial bureaucracy and attained a high position; he marries, has a family, is ruined, is denied by his friends, falls into despair, regains his importance, is renamed to a position, leads a military campaign against the barbarians on the frontier, suffers terrible losses and great victories, is accused again of treason, is imprisoned, tried, condemned to death and, at that moment, not knowing if he will be saved, he wakes up. The rice is still uncooked. The young man decides to return to his village, convinced that "honor is soon followed by disgrace, and promotion by calumny."

In A.C. Graham's anthology, *Poems of the Late T'ang* (Penguin, 1965), I discovered another version which may or may not be older than that of Li Pi, but which I found striking for an intellectual audacity that is missing in the more traditional versions. It is a poem by Meng Chiao (751-814), a poet who was part of the group around Han Yu, about whom I wrote a short essay some time ago ("Hermit with a Stick," *Sulfur* 8, 1983). The title of the poem is mysterious: "The Stones where the Haft Rotted." A short text that precedes the poem, in the manner of an epigraph, clarifies things a little: Wang Chih went to Stone Bridge Mountain to gather firewood; in a clearing in the forest he saw two boys playing chess; seeing him the boys gave him the pit of a date; Wang Chih, who was hungry, chewed the pit without fear and ate it with pleasure; finishing the game, as they collected their chess pieces, one of the boys said to him, "Look, the haft of your axe has rotted." When Wang Chih returned to his village he was a hundred years old. Here is the poem in Graham's translation:

> Less than a day in paradise,
> And a thousand years have passed among men.
> While all the pieces are still being laid on the board
> All things have changed to emptiness.
> The woodman takes the road home,
> The haft of his axe has rotted in the wind:
> Nothing is what it was but the stone bridge
> Still spanning a rainbow cinnabar-red.

In all the versions of the story the superiority of celestial time is made manifest in two ways that, although different, produce the same result. The first is a disproportionate span of time: the dream of the Sleepers of Ephesus lasts more than a century, and it takes a century for the boys that Wang Chih meets on the mountain to play a game of chess. The second is an indescribable intensity: the adventures and misfortunes of the protagonist of *Kantan* occur in less time than it takes to cook a little rice. Either way, terrestrial time is devalued, and what is underscored is the illusory nature of reality, its radical inconsistency. The comparison between the two worlds takes on the irrefutable form of a syllogism and the powerful conviction of a lived experience: the other world is real and this world is unreal; therefore, we must renounce the world of here to attain the world of there.

Other-wordly time is a kind of metaphysical acid that dissolves reality, that empties it of all its attributes, and reveals it to be as it is: an appearance, an illusion, a skeleton that crumbles back to dust. It is less than nothing: it is a lie. The devaluation of worldly reality is more rigorous and total in the idealistic systems of India and in their counterpart, Buddhism. In them,

too, is the most radical renunciation of the world. Asceticism and sensuality are the two extremes of India, or more precisely, the two complementary expressions of its excessive genius. The Chinese and the Japanese, embracing Buddhism, retained its radical negation, but softened it. There are two characteristic qualities of Chinese and Japanese civilization that do not appear in India: humor and reticence. Both are present in the version of Buddhism the East has given us.

Meng Chiao's poem follows tradition in all of its points yet, with great subtlety, amplifies one of the strangest elements in the story of Wang Chih: the opposition between hard and soft. In celestial time the hard becomes soft: the pit turns into the fruit, the axe handle rots away. In both cases celestial time gives life to inanimate matter—makes it, in other words, mortal. True immortality is beyond life and death: it is immutable. The vulnerability of these stone-like things reveals that they too are mortal: they lack true substance, they are empty, they are an illusion. Celestial time works on them as the reasoning of Buddhist theologists works on metaphysical substance: it is a solvent of reality. Nevertheless, Meng Chiao's final couplet implies something completely different, and is a negation of the traditional attitude.

The corrosive power of celestial time, which in an instant can make the hard soft, change a young man into a centenarian, and reveal the emptiness of the universe, must nevertheless submit to a silent but invincible power: nature. Thus, in the last two lines of the poem, there appears an idea that is the basis for Chinese civilization, and which has inspired all of its creations: the true divinity of nature, which gives birth to the gods and men, and to which they must return. Celestial time can do nothing against natural time: the length of a chess game in the world *there* takes up a great deal of time *here*, but all the immense power of the gods vanishes before a simple mountain. Between heaven and people there is the earth. Nothing which stood yesterday remains except Stone Bridge Mountain, which stretches out on the horizon like a cinnabar-colored rainbow. The rainbow is a true bridge, material and spiritual, between celestial time and human time.

At the end of this short note, I begin to wonder: have I gone too far? The experts may wince, but I'm comforted by the thought that perhaps the eccentric Han Yu, that friend of substantiation, would approve of my interpretation.

Meng Chiao (751–814)

COLD CREEK

1

Frost rinsing water free of color, delicate
scales appear in Cold Creek. Come with such

pleasure to this hollow mirror of emptiness,
I find a spent and sullen body shining back

there. Unable to hide itself now, something
prowling at bottom reappears—new again,

shimmering. Clear and open as our tender
affections, this stream is a trap set for us.

Grown bright again, simple and shallow, its
heart frozen by night already flows full

this morning. And one handful, emerald-green
clarity, rinses dust of a thousand worries

far away. Now I see: once people muddy this
stream, it's nothing like mountain springs.

2

The way stretching along these Lo-yang
shores is the creek fronting my ancestral

village. Pale ice passing boats shatter
clatters like blue agate. Green water

freezes into green jasper, white-water
blossoming into emblems of white jade.

All light—in this priceless mirror,
heaven's bright light evens all things out.

Making my way down to menacing curves,
clutching dead branches, I hear widows

crying. Frost gives up little fragrance.
It evens out these blank, frozen reaches.

Losing the path, I sit like a simple-minded
fool, just watching and listening. Kids

work, hacking at brambles along the shore.
They talk of sorrows, countless sorrows.

3

I sip wine at dawn, then walk out through
snow to the clear creek. Frozen into knife-

blades, rapids have sliced ducks wide open,
hacked geese apart. Stopping overnight here

left their feathers scattered, their blood
gurgling down into mud and sand. I stand

alone, lost in thought, words giving way
to that acrid clamor of the heart. Frozen

blood mustn't beget spring. If it begets
spring, its spawn isn't evened out. And if

frozen blood breaks into blossom, widows
won't stop crying. Hidden, a village all

hidden away, thorns and brambles—all
fields frozen and dead no one could plow.

4

Men pole boats, banking jade stars aside,
trailing out scattered fireflies. Cold

north plunging icy lament deep, starved
hunters chant invocations to hidden fish.

Frozen teeth gnaw and grind at themselves.
Wind chimes clatter in sour wind. All this

immaculate grief—it's inescapable. It
rinses hearing clean of the least sound.

The current of rippling emerald is gone,
and colorful floss fallen, flight-tattered.

Ground glare ice, branches splintered,
things can't walk, can't roost. Wounded,

they squawk and shriek, yelp and howl,
accusing heaven: *When will peace return?*

5

Water curving then flowing straight—scales,
how its bone-white dragon scales ripple,

frozen gusts tearing at splintered confusion,
opening the bitter valley's minced and salted

wail. Petitions of protest die away here.
Animals open their hearts to one another,

and once my bowstring's broken, they come
breathing their last, striving to be guests.

All this austerity brings earth's routine
workaday killing to an end. Clarity, all one

shimmering ache of clarity—it's here that
source of change stirs, that life-bringing

promise. Clearing skies rinse sun and moon
clean. Planets and stars appear in azure

depths. But standing alone, feet in snow,
I chant to myself. A thousand worries renewed.

Heaven's Aspersion Star blazes with bright
nothing. Tongue Star rails on and on, empty.

But like Emperor Yao, the wise don't listen:
even meager Confucius was needed by others.

My proclamation is over, and I still can't
reason out those ancient promises of *duty*.

6

Even the frozen dead have become food now,
and killing wind still hasn't died down.

If we make a weapon of open-hearted duty,
open-hearted duty blossoms at knife-point,

and at knife-point, open-hearted duty smells
rank. Where's the nobility in that? Here,

rising waves unsheathe swords of ice. They
slash each other like enemies, like bitter

enemies. Snow needling into fish hearts,
fish hearts blush into brilliant reds,

a seething along edges of shadow seemingly
telling how its been cut and sliced apart.

This *ch'i* born of some strange place—who
drove it into these waters of our homeland,

cutting spring's first month apart, sealing
darkness in a hundred valleys? Looking up,

I wonder at clear skies, fresh sunlight
calling this grief and sorrow into doubt.

7

Bitter cold, an old-timer of the creek
weeping—frozen tears fall in a tinkling

clatter. In the form of birds dead, beasts
dead, snow slices into the flurried heart.

A frozen sword's edge won't cut, and once
bowstrings stiffen, no one draws them back.

I've always heard the valiant never eat
heaven's slaughter. Chopping down through

jade, I bury the remains, grief-stricken
sight itself a lament for all that beauty.

8

Remnant ice shudders on the windblown creek,
creek grown ripe with bright spring. Blossoms

drip. Jade melts, setting the newborn dragon
loose, its scales glittering into rippling

pellucid curves. At this distance, spring
thaw begun, I bathe in the fragrant crossing.

A thousand miles of ice sliced open, and even
a single ladleful renews that open-hearted

warmth. Frozen spirits rinse each other clean.
Trickles struggle into life and flow anew.

Suddenly, as if all sword wounds were past,
the body of a hundred battles begins rising.

LAMENTS OF THE GORGES

1

There was a time people laughed together.
Now, who is there to share this lament?

Laments of the gorges mourn lone spirits.
High winds howl. Between cliffs, ghosts

embrace an empty moon, disappearing,
appearing—they can't stop themselves.

We live and die in this lightning flash,
spring's thundering thousand-foot swells

flooding gorges with ever changing sound,
dragging jade-pure currents into whirlpool

clarities. Riverbanks battered and awash,
sawtooth waves open. Snarling, snarling

and gaping bottomless there, a swilling
lure, they promise unfathomed catastrophe,

spewing out the valley's brimful cries,
swirling embattled around angry rocks.

Felons were sent home to their villages
once; now talent lands you in prison,

now a recluse confuses people. They suspect
your mouthful of snow. It startles them.

And even simple people rarely prove true.
It's money that makes friends. Yellow gold

buys the grief mourners bring. They're
soon gone, though, and their tears dry.

But I foster the heart's old ways. For you,
I'm emptiness broken and scattered away.

2

Water all heaven above and heaven below,
a boat leaves earth entering earth here.

Swordblades of rock slice at each other,
angry dragons filling rock-broken waves,

and though flowers and trees renew fleeting
spring, freezing winds make autumn forever.

Unearthly voices rise from hidden dens.
Flies thicken, buzzing currents in flight.

The sun sinking deep, drowning lament,
where can we take our invocations of grief?

3

Three Gorges one thread of heaven over
ten thousand cascading thongs of water,

slivers of sun and moon sheering away
above, and wild swells walled-in below,

splintered spirits flash, a few glints
frozen how many hundred years in dark

gorges midday light never reaches, gorges
hungry froth fills with peril. Rotting

coffins locked into tree roots, lonely
bones twist and sway, dangling free,

and grieving frost roosts in branches,
keeping lament's dark, distant harmonies

fresh. Exile, tattered heart scattered
away, you simmer in seething flame here,

your life like fine-spun thread, its
road a trace of string travelled away.

Offer tears to mourn the water-ghosts,
and water-ghosts take them, glimmering.

4

Young, clear-voiced dragons howl in these
gorges. Fresh scales born of rock, they

spew froth of fetid rain, heaving breath
churning up black sinkholes. Here, strange

lights glint, always changing, and hungry
swords await you. This venerable old maw

still hasn't eaten its fill. Ageless teeth
voice the fury of cliffs, cascades gnawing

through these three gorges, these gorges
full of jostling and snarling, snarling.

5

In gorges, from pools ten hundred feet deep,
dragons voice their age-old explanations.

Cruel waves may keep strict accounts, drinking
blood to nurture children and grandchildren,

but without Kao Yao's gentle justice, there's
no sense to feasting on prison-drowned spirits.

Something there, mystery haunting darkness,
the empty talk of ghosts goes on and ever on,

and hearing lament in sobbing cascades, gorges
mourn widowed gibbons. When there's nothing

human in the sounds gorges make, gorges where
blades of churning water slice at themselves,

who can we seek out with all this complaint,
who petition with voices bitter and drowned?

6

Sun and moon broken at the rim of these
gorges, sun and moon, so much splintered

light—things grow all tilted askew
here, and birds tilt askew in flight.

Hidden rocks locking teeth, summoned
spirits never return from these depths.

Clear streams become wild blurs of armor,
clothing jade-pure rock in shimmering

color. And hungrily swallowed cascades
thunder, frothing like swirling grease.

You can't wander spring gorges, though
there's barely a trace of fetid grasses.

7

Light flowing in gorges plays across cliffs,
shapes changing, blossoms spectral without

spring. Hidden among roots, jade-pure rain
gracing river crossings, froth blazes red.

This Pa valley a dragon at heart, river demons
people Pa villages. Eating whatever lives,

they don't care if you're noble and wise.
We all nurse our lives into death alone,

nothing to trust in those fetid voices, our
songs forced, happiness a sham. Harvests

of fields tilted askew relentless, savage
scales filling poison waters—you can't

make such unearthly things friends, can't
work out lament in laments of the gorges.

8

Water swords and spears raging in gorges,
my boat drifts across heaving thunder. My

life in the hands of serpents and snakes,
I face frenzied wind and rain day-in day-out.

How many fleeing officials travel these
gorges, gorges rank inhabitants people? You

can't search out a heart beneath this sheen,
this flood that's stored away aftermath

forever. Arid froth raining boundless mist,
froth all ablaze and snarling, snarling—

what of that thirst for wisdom when you're
suddenly here, dead center in these waters?

9

Owls call in human voices, and dragons
wolf down heaving mountain waters. Here

in broad daylight, with all the enticing
serenity of clear, breezy skies, they

beggar wisdom, snarling everything alive
in fetid gatherings of vine-Covered depths.

Want filling fanged cascades bottomless,
sawtooth froth swells everywhere. Among

trees all tilted askew, no birds nesting
anywhere, gibbons swing back and forth.

Who can listen to laments of the gorges
when nothing rights the wrongs done here?

J. P. **SEATON**

Kuan Hsiu (832–912)

Still little known outside China, Kuan Hsiu was highly regarded as a poet, calligrapher and portrait painter in his own time, and a large selection of his poetry is included in the Ch'uan T'ang Shih. A Ch'an Buddhist monk, he traveled from warlord court to warlord court during the final chaotic years of the T'ang, looking for a Lord worth serving, and in addition to poetry on the traditional topics of the Ch'an poet, his works include a number of ballads of social protest and poems in praise of good government.

—J.P.S.

ON THE BORDER, THREE POEMS

I.

mountains: no green
and no clean water.
poisonous wind, and
sands rank with blood stench.

tartars on horseback
hate the birds, flying:
draw bows at will, to bring them down.
you can hear their cries
from above the clouds.

II.

Gusts blow a cloud up, sudden
from the sand: we can tell the
tartars are massing to cross the River Liao.
Gulping the dust of fear, here, now, us
border guards: sure we're ghosts, already.

III.

In Green Mound Cave, they say
a white wolf dwells.

Once in a while
it comes out
looks East, and howls

and howls

and howls

Paint that for me, if you can,
my painter friend.

WRITTEN IN THE MOUNTAINS

A mountain's a palace
for all things crystalline and pure:
there's not a speck of dust
on a single one of all these flowers.

When we start chanting poems like madmen
it sets all the peaks to dancing.
And once we've put the brush to work
even the sky becomes mere ornament.

For you and me the joy's in the doing
and I'm damned if I care about "talent."

But if, my friend, from time to time
you hear sounds like ghostly laughter. . .
It's all the great mad poets, dead,
and just dropping in for a listen.

CH'I LIANG'S GOOD WIFE

Ch'in went without the Way,
thought he'd build a Long Wall
to keep the wild Huns out.
A million workers pounded earth
and piled up brick, three thousand miles.
So Ch'i Liang's good wife wept,
her father gone, her husband
gone, childless she was, bereft.
She cried out, and the Great Wall fell
in bitter desert dawn.
She cried once more, and Ch'i Liang's
bones appeared: starved spirit, weary soul,
went home together then.

I'll tell the kids out in the street:
"You can't do less."

SONG OF THE PALACE OF CH'EN

Think sad thoughts of other days,
those palace gates, overflowing. . .
Reckless feasting, feckless loves:
no Sages, there.
Jade trees' blossoms singing, there
among a hundred flowers.
Coral jeweled, the very window frames,
sun from the sea, scattered, jewels.
Great ministers to audience; Mi'Lord
still in his cups, and even when he'd sobered
few wise words got past *his* ears.
So. The Palace of Ch'en
is rubble in this farmer's field,
and the peasant's plow turns up the shards
of a courtier's mirror.

THREE VERSES ON RUNNING INTO THE TAOIST MASTER "IN EMPTINESS"

I.

On the Westmost crag
of Heaven's Eye Mountain:
ruins of a most ancient altar.

Beside the altar
in the floating snow
we said goodbye.

Then, then; now, now:
only a little more
than forty years.

Returned, together
hearts of the same sort
then and now.

II.

Medicines, or omen casters
the slips of tortoise shell in your bag
look like pennies to me.

They say your years
and mine
are nigh the same:

burnt in a pot
shell slips might tell
Heaven's Way, we might follow.

But what heaven's to rise to
where there's no other
beyond?

III.

So, say my way is different from yours.
We both have old men's hair, and beards. . .
It's a common saying that words can kill faith.
I like to vase the first Spring blossoms
in a rough old funeral jar.

SONG OF THE WASTELAND

Wasteland, and again, wasteland,
nothing but an eyeful of dust.
You say my hair's gone white. . . ?

Every single strand is sprung
from a different sorrow.
They're all on the make, all crafting lies,
and even the ones who "make it"
won't treat you like a fellow human. . .
Deep or shallow, high or low,
all that grows here's briars:
wasteland, and again a wasteland.
Wasteland all around, I'll
die of sorrow.

SONG OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN

Born before me, born
before, I'll never meet him.

He loved peace, but there was no peace,
so he set his brows like bolts of stars. . .

Yellow dusk, then rain and sleet
and sky like a bruise, like a cancer.

He's gone, now, and
I'll not know where.

BAD GOVERNMENT

Sleet and rain, as if the pot were boiling.
Winds whack like the crack of an axe.
An old man, an old old man,
toward sunset crept into my hut.
He sighed, sighed he, as if to himself,
"These rulers, so cruel: why, tell me
why they must steal till we starve,
and then slice off the skin from our bones?
For a song from some beauty
they'll go back on sworn words;
for a song from some tart,
they'll tear our huts down. . .
for a song, for a sweet song or two,
they'll slaughter ten thousand like me, or
like you. You can cry as you will, let
your hair turn pure white,
let your whole clan go hungry. . .
no good wind will blow
no gentle breeze
begin again.
Lord Locust Plague, and Baron Bandit Bug,
one East, one West, one North, one South,
We're surrounded."

JED **RASULA**

James John Garth Wilkinson

In October 1847 Henry Thoreau terminated his now famous sojourn at Walden Pond in order to move into Emerson's house, to help tend to family welfare while the Concord sage went abroad. When Emerson toured England at the peak of his fame and influence during the winter and spring of 1847-1848, he renewed his long-standing friendship with Carlyle (with whom he went to Stonehenge), visited Wordsworth, Dickens, Tennyson. He also brought with him a letter of introduction from his American friend Henry James, Sr., to a homeopathic physician called Garth Wilkinson. They met on April 17, 1848 as they dined with Crabb Robinson, William Blake's friend. Ten years earlier Wilkinson had been lent a copy of Blake's engraving of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and the following year (1839) published, with his brother, a commercial edition of Blake's text (the first publication, as such, of anything by Blake). Wilkinson was 26 at the time (born June 3, 1813), and was shortly to make the acquaintance of Browning, Carlyle, Henry James, Sr., and of course Emerson.

One of the figures profiled in Emerson's 1845 lecture series on "Representative Men" (published in 1850) was Swedenborg, whose work he was reading in Wilkinson's translations. On the evidence of his praise, Emerson was deriving much also from Wilkinson's prefatory matter: "The admirable preliminary discourses with which Mr. Wilkinson has enriched these volumes, throw all the contemporary philosophy of England into shade," he wrote, proclaiming Wilkinson "a philosophic critic, with a coequal vigor of understanding and imagination comparable only to Lord Bacon's. . ." Emerson was willing to extend such praise to practical support, and while on the circuit in England lecturing to Mechanics' Institutes and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, he drew his sponsors' attention to Dr. Wilkinson.

Wilkinson's first set of public lectures, on "The Physics of Human Nature," was delivered in Liverpool during August 1848. (In June he had rushed over to Paris to witness something of the revolutionary uprising, having been preceded there as well by Emerson, who'd gone over in May, when he lunched with Chopin and met de Tocqueville.) Wilkinson's lectures were ostensibly medical, but in fact applied the Swedenborgian

doctrine of correspondences to the topic of the body. While he translated many volumes of Swedenborg during his long lifetime, Wilkinson was hardly doctrinaire, and in fact aroused the wrath of sectarian New Church adherents. He was a unique character in several ways, in fact. Described politically as a "radically liberal conservative," Wilkinson was a fierce advocate of public hygiene; champion of women's rights (anti-corset in the 1840s, pro-bicycling in the 1880s), firm supporter of the first licensed female doctor, proponent of the Married Woman's Property Bill; anti-imperialist, and at age 81 champion of African rights and advocate of racial equality between blacks and whites; defender of the restorative and inspirational properties of wine; bitter opponent of the prevailing medical practice of what he called "promiscuous drugging"; practicing physician, whose patients included Nathaniel Hawthorne's wife and children, and Lizzie Siddal (Dante Rosetti's laudanum-addicted wife). His contacts as well as his interests were eclectic. Swedenborgian, Fourierist, homeopathist, first publisher of Blake, proto-feminist, anti-imperialist, much respected by Carlyle, Emerson, the senior Henry James, among others: a unique and curiously neglected man (and I should thank Gerrit Lansing for drawing him to my attention many years ago). A thorough study of Wilkinson would illuminate much of the cultural life of the mid- nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic, making especially clear the links between transcendentalism, Swedenborg, utopian experiments like Brook Farm, Fourierist phalancteries, republican revolution, medical reform, egalitarianism, and, in Wilkinson's case, the romance of Nordic roots. While this would eventually lead to racist assumptions about the "superiority" of Anglo-American "Nordic stock" toward the end of the century, it seems to have led Wilkinson in the opposite direction, as if a sustained look at the particularity of his own ethnic background led him to regard *any* ethnic specificity as a unique personal incentive, so that African roots were as much to be prized as any other.

Wilkinson's diverse interests are reflected in the books he published, which are so varied that I doubted, for a time, whether they could all be by the same man. It turns out they were. A partial list includes *The Human Body* (1851), *War, Cholera, and the Ministry of Health* (1854), *Painting with Both Hands* (1856), *Improvisations from the Spirit* (1857: an early document of what later became known as automatic writing), *Homeopathic Principles Applied to Insanity* (1857), *A Free State and Free Medicine* (1869), *Revelation, Mythology, Correspondences* (1887), *Oannes according to Berosus* (1888), *The Soul is Form and doth the Body Make* (1890), *Epidemic Man and His Visitations* (1892), *The New Jerusalem and the Old Jerusalem* (1894), *The Affections of Armed Powers: A Plea for a School of Little Nations* (1896), *The Book of the Edda called 'Voluspa'* (1897), and *Isis*

and Osiris in the Book of Respirations (1899), not to mention six books on Swedenborg in addition to his translations, and various medical pamphlets.

Wilkinson's most popular book was *The Human Body and its Connexion with Man, illustrated by the Principal Organs* (1851). This was the eventual fruit of his 1848 lectures on "The Physics of Human Nature," arranged like those addresses into discrete topics: The Human Brain, The Human Lungs, Assimilation and its Organ, The Human Heart, The Human Skin, The Human Form, concluding with a chapter on Health. Wilkinson's approach is at once medically precise—nearly half the book reads like a medical textbook (he was a member, after all, of the Royal College of Surgeons *before* he became a homeopathist)—and spiritually inspired by his Swedenborgian belief in the universal validity of correspondences. There's something about Wilkinson's adept vacillation between the antimonies of spirit and matter that makes *The Human Body* an intriguing parallel to its contemporary volume *Leaves of Grass,* as if it were the prose analog to Whitman's singular vision. It's a book that continues to be instructive. While he seems to be unaware of him, James Hillman's exquisite treatise *The Thought of the Heart* (1981) is thoroughly anticipated by Wilkinson's chapter on that subject. Likewise, he might have been a primary figure in the work of the Dutch phenomenological psychoanalyst J.H. van den Berg, whose studies of "Metabletica" (the science of socio-physiological transformation) and attacks on the medical institutionalization of psychiatry repeatedly stress the imaginative paucity of founding medicine on anatomization. Wilkinson, too, thought the derivation of anatomical knowledge from vivisection or the study of corpses was intrinsically deficient; and characteristically, the title page of *The Human Body* bears an epigraph to that end: "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." What follows is a selection of aphorisms and slightly more extended passages from the second edition (1860) of *The Human Body,* chosen to indicate the motivating principle of correspondences as well as to give some sense of Wilkinson's prose, which can be as surprising and elastic as Emerson's, as in the latter's synopsis of Swedenborg: "In the transmission of the heavenly waters, every hose fits every hydrant."

—J.R.

from *The Human Body*

The Human Brain

The brain then is presumably the body of the mind, and whatever is wisdom or faculty in the mind, is furniture or machinery answering to faculty, in the brain. And as the mind is the man, the brain is his representative, or the man in another degree.

This is the solid voice of the head, or the most general truth of consciousness, which lies in the head, and speaks from the head. . . . It is then the consciousness or instinctive natural history of the organs, from which we commence: not what man says of the brain, but what the brain says of itself in man. (1)

It [the nerve spirit {or spinal chord }] is the posture-master of the solids, and the charioteer of the fluids. We see then how full the body is of eyes—how instinct with spirit-like forces, and by the analogies of mental and social life, how irresistible are the causes of harmony, design and co-operation in the bodily fabric. (31)

The starry dance, the music of the spheres, the astrologic influences, the experiences of the supernatural, are but aims to express the perceptions and properties of this immortal nature which lives on the seeds of the sun. By this liquid flesh it is that the soul sees its face in the rushing river of creations, and feels the issuing universe, and the finest tremble of the stars. In this wisest vest of nature, it sits at the feast of nature's wisdom. This is the Panic element of man in unison with the Panic of the world. (42)

The Human Lungs

Human life is illustrated by every organ of the body. Each contributes a share to the general vitality. The brains are as the tranquil inward respiring of existence elevated into mind; a life which seems immaterial and motionless, until from the opened head the capacities of organization come to light, and the brain demonstrates that our noblest powers are incarnate, real and progressive. That which is the secret of the brains is the open lesson of the lungs. They live physically and largely the same life which the brains live metaphysically and most minutely. In the running wheel of life the imperceptible motion of the axle is thought; the sweep at the periphery is respiration. The brains give us the free principles of life, and the lungs, its free play in nature. (59)

Thus when we speak of the lungs. . .we imply the whole engine of breathing even to the skin, and regard the chest itself as a dress or membrane inseparable from the lung-principle. (62)

The universal animal heat of the body is the organic zeal or love of self-preservation hotly present in every part. (65)

For the physical man himself is the builded aroma of the world. This, then, at least, is the office of the lungs—to drink the atmosphere with the planet dissolved in it. (69-70)

Smell is inspiration in its highest case; the nose is a lung planted upon the brain, to feed it with perceptions and excite it to operations. (85)

[T]he *voice*. . . consists of perceptions freed from the mind, and launched into the air, is made of the material of the expirations. The mind is breathed out into the social world by the expirations and their pauses, and not by the inspirations. (86)

. . .the body is *solidaire*; that whatever the head does, the trunk does in its way, and the limbs in theirs: in short, that man is so formed as to act only in wholes, each full size. In this way we are constructed upon the principles of poetic unity, the mind and the body being but one volume written out in the rhymes of the brain and the lungs. (93, footnote)

This is the first motive of the lungs, or the pulmonary atom of the pleasures of the world, compounded however of two elements, the nose-breath and the mouth-breath, the former to please or inspire the mind of the brain, and the latter to please the mind of the body. This term, if persisted in, leads to *swoon*, from defect of expiration; whence swoon is the prolonged or compound atom of the pause after inspiration. The pleased lungs are so gluttonous of this world's life, that the world, bent upon equilibrium, swallows and drowns them in this swoon, which is the ocean of sensual satisfactions. Expiration, however, concurs with the spiritual life, and is the condition of intellect, or of dying daily. And the pause which follows expiration, the refusal to breathe in from the surface, and the stand taken in the depths, is the atom which in its least form concurs with abstraction of thought, but when compounded, runs on into *trance*. The likeness of this in the animal world is hybernation. Thus every thought is a little trance, and every pleasure an initial swoon, as we shall presently see that each fair breath is a little life, whether of sleeping or waking. And thus if the breath is given in inspiration, the spirit is impressed upon expiration; for the spirit of humanity is not in the breath which is taken in, but in that which is given out; the former being planetary, but the latter psychical. (95)

The heard breath of your neighbor is moreover regulative and contagious

upon your own, and increases and realizes the union of which it is the effect, especially when the breath of all is represented in an audible rhythm. In this way the Eddas and poetries bind mankind into sheaves. . . (97)

[Lungs] are a prophecy that his body, and bodies of his body, may be similarly suspended. For what are his lungs but a balloon corded down into his flesh, of which, when fully inflated by the spirit, his body is the car? (102)

[O]ur little atmosphere in motion, like the great atmosphere, rubs our atoms against each other everywhere with electric rustle and collision, and by its congenial frictions magnetizes the assembled parts, and they open the cases of the life-gems. (104)

The soul, an inhabitant of all heights and climates, addresses the tongue of each to the creatures of the same; and one word is a brain, another the lungs, and so on through the hieroglyphical polyglot of the body. . . . What *now* are the lungs? They are a yawning hollow in the top of the man, the sides of which cavern are alive. The world enters them bodily. Tendency to vacuum, which nature abhors, is their spirit. They draw us out into more than we are, and we shrink back as nearly as we can into our old dimensions. Reluctant vegetation ceases as they open, and life is born, crying. They are an engine added to the body, under whose draw it becomes progressive, and every space therein is enlarged, to take in more, and to live more. They pull open all the solids, that all the fluids may enter them; and strain every nerve and blood vessel into fresh activities and virtues. They give room and airiness to the inward parts, and set them to work in a daily larger sphere. Now these, in altered phrase, are also the functions of the understanding mind, which as it is opened, shews and causes new wants, and new wills and ways. . . . The understanding, like the lungs, is no wind, or shadow, but the substantive power and voice of all our wants. . .the beckoning of the universe to the atom, to come up among the stars. (106)

Assimilation and its Organ

The world also and circumstance are as flexible and correspondent: according to our wants, they feed us with good or evil, and bend about to the whole exigency and gladiatorship of the spirit. The soul distills the food not into chemicals and gases, but incarnations of its moods. Anger sops in the same dish with love, and both are confirmed at the one supper. This rapid ensoulment of the alimental chain is especially marked in the saliva, which, as we noticed before, is a running commissary between the mind and the food. The soul glitters down upon its salts, and smites them with the reigning love beam. (128)

The Human Heart

The evidence [that feelings live in the heart], true to the organ, is circular: the heart is a self-supplying knot of affirmations. (172)

. . .the heart itself is physically as well as feelingly at the bottom of the wells of language. So near is it to the lungs, that the words in which it signalizes itself are like the bubblings of its own blood. (173)

Certainly the heart shews all the signs of loving the blood, which is the fearful and recognized symbol and casket of human life, for it grasps at the blood eighty times every minute. With quadrumanous hands it clutches the passing life-stream. . . . Its eagerness is apparent from its work, as the busy hands of men shew that they also are *con amore* in their occupations. And if we love the blood of our race and kindred, and embrace it through the skin and outworks of their bodies, much more does the heart love its own blood, which it squeezes hot and naked with its ruddy fingers. . . . There is a fiery and as it were abstract purity in this passion of our bosom's lord. If *we* love ourselves, the *heart* loves the life which is the self of self; and this love it shews by grasp after grasp, a zeal which never sleeps, by fresh manipulations of the blood with every varying feeling; in short, by all the signs which shew that we ourselves are in active and impassioned pursuit of our objects. . . (177–178)

Each organ has its *genius loci*, which possesses everything, even the most transient guest, in the organ. To come then within the sphere of the heart, is to feel and to be all that the heart is and means; for the heart is haunted ground, and there is no escaping its influences. So it is that when youth and maiden come under the grasp of the heart, or when life carries them into the sexual auricle, they are not the same people, nor have they the same names, as when under the paternal roof, or in the friendly conclave; but love has located them afresh, and gives them its own new names. This is a needful memorandum in the laws of the heart and the blood. We have feeling, the fire of life, already given by fact in this organ; we need not endeavour to import it; the business is, to see it in its place. (182)

The transition from the veins to the arteries is an incarnation of the passing over of life or feeling from the private to the public stage; of mankind meeting the world, and flaming with a new lustre of eye when the great objects are recognized. The public air is thenceforth inserted into the feelings, whereof each goes round with an oxygen mirror that shews it the universal in the individual, and makes it shape its face and gestures into historic parallels. Every globule of blood thence conceits itself that it is a

man-maker and a world- maker, and it is braced with the girdle of public strength. The feeling in the lungs accordingly is one of inspiration and erection, in which the heart's proper feelings swim as in a new atmosphere. (183)

Each feeling. . .is surrounded by its own film of imaginations, which body forth what it is, in a *quasi*-intellectual glass. "The imagination of the heart" is the light of which feeling is the fire, and causes every emotion to shine with its own peculiar ray. Where are these imaginations localized? On the inner membrane of the organ, we reply; for the inward skin of the heart is its blood-face, in which it expresses its desires. Skins are always facial structures, and express what lies beneath them. By this membrane, the blood and the heart understand each other, or look in each other's eyes, which amounts to the same thing. Imagination then is localized all over the cavities, which are indeed the express moulds of the thoughts of the heart, or as the Scripture phrases it, the chambers of imagery. If we desire to know what these bodily imaginations are, their shape is given in the fine membranes which transmit the emotions of the blood, and the motions of the heart, reciprocally to each other, and make them acquainted.

Imagination, however, in this case the heart-house, consists of a common chamber with two doors, and here we remark that everywhere, in the mind and the body, desire opens us by means of imaginations, and thus is the dilating, opening, or cavity-making faculty. We open our mouths for food under the influence of hunger working through and shaped by the imagination of a supply: we make ourselves hollow, to take in what supports and enlarges us. We open our hearts to receive new emotions; our minds, to receive new ideas. Every desire expands us, and each is accompanied by an imagination of the object, which limits the opening to something like the proper size, or constitutes its walls. And so again we are presented with the fact, that imagination is depicted upon the inner walls or front face of the heart. We noticed in the lungs the expansive correspondence of imagination, where it is manifestly want, or an elaborate vacuum produced in the man by nature every moment, to incite him to new infillings. Imagination then is the limit to which the walls stand off, the horizon of present life, or the arch of the caverns of desire. It is different for every cavity, according to its shape, objects, colors, &c.; but wherever there is a cavity it lives, and peoples the hollow with its teeming forms. It is here to be noted, that desire and imagination are one and the same thing from two points of view: the desire being the hollow or void that we feel, *per se*, while the imagination is the same regarded from the walls of the void, which imagine it full of what it wants to occupy. Thus the heart-desires dilate its cavities before the blood is given them, and in the

momentaneous void the imagination anticipates the tide which is to come; and the heart is in every stroke prepared, both by roominess and welcome, for the new life. (195–196)

In the heart we notice valves, which prevent the life current from running back; in the feeling heart there are *states*, or spiritual valves, which hinder the life-loves from regurgitation. . . . Most of us are so full of these valves, that we cannot attend to anything but the present. . . There are then valves in life, which prevent it from going back. And indeed this valve-function is universal. The flaming sword that turned every way was none other than the valve of Paradise. Death also is a valve, which nature keeps up during all moments of investigation, or regurgitation, and only opens from the other side when birth is to take place. . . Valves then in the feeling heart are the present by its activities shutting away the past; memories are the states of the present in which it endeavors to image the past; and they live especially upon the roofs of the cavities, or upon the outspread valves. (196–197)

And yet there is an imagination of the future, which we term hope. Hope however is not a wall, but a hole in our advancing lives through which the firmament is seen. . . . Wherever time or blood is to run, a present is constituted, a valvular state runs back, and hope becomes doubly open from the impossibility of retrogression.

Desire, then, is the heart-void or cavity, imagination is the heart-wall, our present state is the heart-valve, and our hopes of the future are the heart-orifices. (198)

But every part contains the rest; the brains are omnipresent both by substance and by influences. . . So the heart is everywhere; the blood vessels of an organ are its private heart. . . . The body is telegraphic with various stations; the messages are different according to the organs, but one at the fountain head. (201)

[T]he body itself is a metaphor. . . The creation is the body and pressure of all metaphors; and seen actions are done because they carry out the unseen in everlasting resemblances. (204)

"[A]ll men have their hobbies," and these begin in little toys of globules, or blood-dolls, which the heart dandles, dresses, and nurses, intending that the big body shall one day do the same, when the vibration has grown up, and can be the mother of bodily action. (208)

The Human Skin

Of all the creatures of the natural world, man is intended as the most finished, or, in other words, the most exquisitely finite, and the skin is the instrument which first hems him in, and by limiting, completes and individualizes him. . . . Without this boundary, the body would not contain its possessions, and would have no continence, outline and end, but be shed and dissipated in the universe. (227)

In short the skin man is a sponge immersed in nature's *plenum*, and soaking us through, soul-deep, with the substantial properties of every medium. (242)

Now, what is the largest pore in the skin? Without hesitation the mouth . . . What are the next pores? Plainly the nostrils and ears. . . And what is our knowledge of the world, but the knowledge of its faces and heads? (243)

[S]kins are the proper object of the skin; for this system skims the world, takes a film for itself from every surface, and assumes the cream of the body as the matter of the sense of touch. This sense is the essence or single substance of the skin, which clothes the mind and the organism with the personable outside of things. (243)

The presence of skin in the body is the double of the presence of feeling, which is skin-function, in the mind; and as feeling is cointensive with life, skin is coextensive with bodily structure. (246, footnote)

This beauty, they tell us, is only skin-deep, but none of them has told us what is the depth of the skin. At all events it must gauge to profound realms, for it brings the whole man to the surface. (252)

Thus the skin is the kingdom of show, for whatever is seen of mankind is nothing else; a proof of the expressiveness of a covering which can be the universal face. For the skin is the fine but ample decorum in which the inward terminates. (253)

The universe also has the cutaneous principle throughout, as the ground of its beauty, and the substantial theatre of its changes. (255)

Consciousness is the skin of human mind. . .*

[*Philosophers, busy with the investigation of consciousness, do not suspect that they are writing monographs on the cutaneous principles. The Ego and the Me, the self, the personality, and suchlike thin things of

thought, cannot help being somewhat spare, and in themselves dry, for they are skinny subjects. And when consciousness sets up for itself, and assumes that it is the human mind, instead of the bag in which the mind lies, then the diseases of the mental skin begin, and the unconscious philosophers describe their own maladies as the history of the universe. Those who attach themselves to the "pure Ego" as having an independent life in itself, are investigating the hairy scalp of the mind, more or less full of pediculi, which are "the life" that it has "in itself." Those who limit themselves to personality or individuality, are all "face" in their pursuits, and study impudence in its universals. The drier studies of consciousness are busied with the mental scarf-skin; and when the organic history of philosophy is written, the times of barren logic and method will form a chapter, headed, "The Age of Dandruff." For logic is an armour of little shiny scales, infinitesimal flints of thought; in a word, cuticle; and when it is separated from practical ends, scurf; though when legitimate it is the proper varnish of the mind. Again, when consciousness is sought for its own sake, it forms the mental itch, which is a general and excessive self-consciousness. And when it is taken for the world, as by the Berkleyans, it constitutes *elephantiasis scroti mentis*, in which the intellect dwells in the crannies of the warts of its own imagination. We might easily range the diseases of consciousness parallel to those of the skin, and classify the philosophies of consciousness under vesicles, papules, pustules, exanthems, and the like; but time fails, and the work would be both unseemly and irritating. It is enough, however, to indicate that the idols of modern philosophy, the Ego and the Me, the personality, the self, the individuality, are as necessary as our skins, but that they are our surfaces and lowest parts, and require brushing and combing, washing and tending; but will by no means bear deifying; for whatever of dirt and ugliness, whatever private parts there are in us, or come upon us, these skins catch. When we look at the philosophies through the organon of the human body, we see that the skin of every subject, the sensual part, has alone been studied; and that speaking bodily, neither brain, heart, bowels, lungs, or muscles have entered into philosophy, which accordingly has been the dead plane and flatness of the human mind, the coarsest texture of all, as it were the dishcloth of the fates. (258-259, JJGW's footnote)

Consciousness is also an organic sieve, and clears the mind; being the theatre of mental elimination; for the mind tends to consciousness or show, and no sooner are we conscious of anything, than adoption or rejection is involved. Consciousness, for this purpose as well as others, is largely porous, or full of blanks and oblivions for what is not agreeable. Sleep is its great hole or mouth through which stuff is put away, and a thousand slumbers to one thing and wakings to another, vacancies, forgetfulnesses,

and assumed ignorances, are the pores by which it rids itself of thoughts and memories, and refuses them a longer footing in the mind. By consciousness also we stand in the universe of mind, and feel it in all forms and structures, as though mind were matter, and nature the caprice and building of a grand idealism. (260–261)

In the soul, the skin principle is *identity*, whose germ is the *I* that runs along all our time, governs each human verb, and stands as a focus over our actions. . . The soul is protected in nature, because its very surface is a sense of living for ever; the flux of years falls down like water from the oil of such a virtue. (262)

The Human Form

It is further to be observed, that impersonality is human, just like personality, the latter being the skin of which the former is the substance; a substance however which is no substance without that skin to hold it. For the best things in use are impersonal, and the more they are, the better persons we become. (288–289)

J. RODOLFO **WILCOCK**

Aaron Rosenblum

(Tr. by Lawrence Venuti)

Utopians are heedless of methods. To render the human species happy, they are prepared to subject it to murder, torture, incineration, banishment, sterilization, quartering, lobotomy, electrocution, warfare, bombing, and so forth: everything depends on the project. It is somehow encouraging to think that, even in the absence of a project, men are and always will be prepared to murder, torture, incinerate, banish, sterilize, quarter, bomb, and so forth.

Aaron Rosenblum, born in Danzig, raised in Birmingham, had also resolved to bring happiness to humanity. The injuries he caused were not immediate. He published a book on the topic, but the book long lay neglected, and he garnered few adherents. If he had enjoyed a following, in all likelihood Europe would now be without a single potato, street light, ball point pen, piano.

Aaron Rosenblum's idea was extremely simple; he was not the first to think it, but the first to pursue it to its utmost consequences. Only on paper, however, since humanity does not always desire to do what it must to be happy, or prefers to choose its own methods, which, as with the best global projects, also entail murder, torture, imprisonment, exile, quartering, war. Chronologically, Rosenblum's utopia was unfortunate: the book destined to bring him fame, *Back to Happiness or On to Hell* appeared in 1940, precisely when the intellectual world was busily engaged in defending itself from another, equally utopian project of social reform, total reform.

Rosenblum first asked himself: What was the happiest period of world history? Believing himself English, and as such the trustee of a well-defined tradition, he decided that the happiest historical period was the reign of Elizabeth I, under the sage guidance of Lord Burghley. Or at least this was the moment when Shakespeare emerged, England discovered America, and the Catholic Church was forever defeated and forced to seek refuge in the remote Mediterranean. Rosenblum had himself been a High Church Anglican for many years.

Hence the project of *Back to Happiness* was this: to return the world to 1580. To abolish coal, machines, engines, the electric light, corn, petroleum, film, asphalt streets, newspapers, the United States, aeroplanes,

the vote, gasoline, parrots, motorcycles, the Rights of Man, tomatoes, steamships, the iron and steel industry, the pharmaceutical industry, Newton and gravitation, Milton and Dickens, turkeys, surgery, railroads, aluminum, museums, anilines, guano, celluloid, Belgium, dynamite, the weekend, the Seventeenth Century, the Eighteenth Century, the Nineteenth Century, the Twentieth Century, mandatory education, iron bridges, the bus, light artillery, disinfectants, coffee. Tobacco could remain, seeing that Raleigh smoked.

By the same token, it was necessary to re-establish: debtors' prison; the gallows for thieves; slavery for blacks; the stake for witches; ten years of compulsory military service; the custom of abandoning babies by the road on the very day of their birth; torches and candles; the practice of dining in a hat with a knife; the use of the rapier, cutlass, and poniard; hunting with bows; brigandage in the woods; persecution of the Jews; the study of Latin; the prohibition against women appearing on the stage; buccaneers attacking Spanish galleons; the use of the horse for transport and the ox for motor power; the institution of primogeniture; the Maltese Knights at Malta; scholastic logic; the plague, smallpox, and typhus as forms of population control; respect for nobility; mud puddles in central urban streets; wooden buildings; swans breeding on the Thames and hawks in castles; alchemy as a pastime; astrology as a science; the institution of vassalage; trial by ordeal; the lute indoors, the trumpet in the open air; tournaments, damascened armour, coats of arms—in a word, the past.

Now, it was obvious, even to Rosenblum's eyes, that the planning and ordered realization of such an utopia in 1940 would require time and patience, beyond the enthusiastic collaboration of the most influential segment of public opinion. Adolf Hitler, it is true, seemed disposed to facilitate somewhat the achievement of the most compelling aspects of the project, especially those involving eliminations. Yet like a good Christian Aaron Rosenblum could not but notice that the German head of state was letting himself get too carried away by tasks that were ultimately secondary, like the suppression of the Jews, instead of seriously applying himself to staving off the Turks, for example, or organizing tournaments, or spreading syphilis, or illuminating missals.

Furthermore, however much Hitler lent the English a helping hand, he seemed secretly to nurture a certain hostility toward them. Rosenblum realized that he would have to do everything by himself—mobilize public opinion, solicit signatures and support from scientists, sociologists, naturalists, writers, artists, and, in general, lovers of the past. Unfortunately, three months after the publication of the book, the author was recruited by the Home Guard to watch over a warehouse of absolutely no importance in the most deserted area on the Yorkshire coast. He did not even have a telephone at his disposal. His utopia ran the risk of foundering.

It was he who foundered, however, and in a most unusual manner. As he wandered down the beach, gathering cockles and other sixteenth-century items for lunch, in the course of an air attack evidently performed as an exercise, he was killed, blown to pieces in a pit, and his remains were immediately swallowed by the sea.

Mention has already been made of the utopian's lethal vocation. The bomb that destroyed Rosenblum also corresponded to a utopia, not very different from his, even if in appearance more violent. Essentially, his project was based upon the progressive rarefaction of the present. Starting not with Birmingham, which was too dirty and would have required at least a century of cleaning, but rather with a small provincial town like Penzance in Cornwall, it was simply a question of delimiting a zone—perhaps acquiring it with funds from the yet-to-be-founded Sixteenth Century Society—and excluding, with the most fastidious resolve, each and every thing, custom, style, musical composition, and word dating back to the incriminated centuries, that is, XVII, XVIII, XIX, and XX. The fairly complete list of excluded objects, concepts, events and phenomena fills four chapters in Rosenblum's book.

At the same time, the sponsoring institution, namely the Sixteenth Century Society, would provide for the reintroduction of the aforementioned (brigands, candles, swords, beasts of burden, and so forth, through another four chapters of the book), and this would be sufficient to convert the nascent colony into a paradise, or something very similar to a paradise. From London people would hasten in throngs to take the plunge into the 1500s; the resulting filth would immediately initiate a process of natural selection, necessary at least to reduce the population to 1580 levels.

With the contributions of visitors and new members, the Sixteenth Century Society would find itself in a position to enlarge its field of action gradually, expanding even as far as London. Sweeping four centuries of houses and iron manufacture from the capital was a problem requiring a separate solution, probably the announcement of a competition for projects open to all young lovers of the past. The other utopian, the One-Across-the-Channel, seemed already to have something like this in mind. In doubt, Rosenblum opted for encircling: perhaps a mere cincture of Sixteenth Century around London would suffice to precipitate a total collapse.

The project then proceeded rapidly to cover all of England, and from England Europe. In reality, the two utopians were heading for the same goal by different paths: to insure the happiness of humankind. Hitler's utopia, meanwhile, fell into that extreme discredit with which everyone is familiar. Rosenblum's, in contrast, resurfaces periodically, in different guises: some favor the Middle Ages, others the Roman Empire, still others the State of Nature, and Greenblatt even the return of the Ape. If the

estimated population of the chosen period were subtracted from current figures for the world, one would find that billions of people, or hominids, were condemned to death, in accordance with the project. These proposals flourish; Rosenblum's spirit continues to wander the globe.

J(uan). Rodolfo Wilcock was born in Buenos Aires in 1919 and later emigrated to Italy, where he died in 1978 at Viterbo. In Argentina, he associated with the group of writers that included Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares and contributed a short story to Borges and Bioy Casares' anthology of fantastic literature. Beginning in 1960, he started to publish in Italian, producing poetry, drama, journalism, theatre criticism, and many volumes of fiction, mostly short stories. He also wrote Italian translations of Christopher Marlowe, James Joyce (excerpts from *Finnegans Wake)*, and Virginia Woolf. "Aaron Rosenblum" appeared in a collection entitled *La sinagoga degli iconoclasti* (in my version, *The Babel of Iconoclasts)*, published in 1972 by Adelphi (Milan). Wilcock's Italian writing has never been translated into English (his only Spanish text to be Englished was that story in the fantastic anthology).

PAUL **BLACKBURN**

from Poem of the Cid

Blackburn's *Cid* is one of the secret books of postwar American poetry. It was originally published in 1966 by the American R.D.M. Corporation as part of its *Study* Master* line ("the quality series of supplementary study-aids"), although the book is a complete translation and not an outline or trot. The company soon after went bankrupt, and for years the book could only be found amidst the heaps of *Cliff's Notes* in the seedier used book stores. I'm told that a copy now goes for $500, which is exactly what Blackburn was paid to do the translation.

It is surely the liveliest American translation of a Medieval European epic, ever. The battle scenes are thrilling, and the dialogue—the real speech of real soldiers talking—makes the poem, in places, impossible not to read aloud. Companion to Blackburn's translation masterpiece, *Proensa*, it's high time *Poem of the Cid* was reprinted. These are the first few pages, the tragic then comic opening, and they are published here with the kind permission of Joan Miller-Cohn.

—E.W.

1. The Cid Calls His Vassals Together. They'll Go into Exile With Him.

[. . .]

He
turned and looked back to see the towers,
tears running from his eyes:

saw the gate standing ajar,
doors left open without locks,
the porches bare
of either pelts or coverings,
perches empty of falcons, empty of molted hawks. He sighed,
mio Cid, his worries were weighty, and not small.

The Cid spoke well and with great measure:
"Thanks be to thee, my Lord, our
Father, which art in heaven!
It's my enemies have turned
this treachery upon me."

2. Omens on the Road to Burgos.

Then they set spur to horse,
loosed the reins, they opened up then.
Crows flew across to their right
as they were leaving Bivar,
and as they drove down to Burgos,
crows crossed to their left.
The Cid shrugged and shook his head:
"So, we're thrown out of the country, well,
cheer up Fáñez! When we come back to Castille, we'll
come back with all the honors."

3. The Cid Enters Burgos.

The Cid Ruy Díaz came into Burgos,
the pennons of 60 lances with him.
They have to get a look at him,
men and women both.
Townsmen and their wives crowd the windows,
tears in their eyes
and in their mouths
a single sentence:
"God, what a good vassal!
If only he had a worthy lord."

4. No One Will Put The Cid up. Only a Small Girl Addresses Him and That to Tell Him to Go Away. The Cid Finds He Has to Make Camp Outside of Town, on the Sand of the Riverbank.

They would have invited him gladly,
only not one dared,
so great was Alfonso's fury.
The night before, his letter,
sealed with severity and heavy with [warnings,
had gotten to Burgos:
that
to mio Cid Ruy Díaz
no man should give shelter,
or by the king's true word, he'd lose
his goods, his eyes from his head, his soul, and his body.
Everyone was ashamed, and in sorrow,
hid from mio Cid,
and no one chanced a word.
The Campeador rode up to a place
they could stay for the night, and
when he reached the door he found it barred.
For fear of the king they had agreed
that, unless he broke it down, by
no means to let him in.
The Cid's men called loudly to those inside,
they did not answer a word. Mio
Cid dug in his spurs, raced up to the door,
pulled one foot out of the stirrup and
gave it a helluva kick.
Door was well secured and did not budge.
Then a little girl of nine years
leaned above him over the [balcony:
"Hey Campeador, in a good hour you girded on sword!
But the king has forbidden it,
his letter arrived last night
with heavy warnings and stamped with the royal seal.

We don't dare open to you, or
put you up,
for if we did,
we'd lose our goods and our houses, even
they eyes out of our faces. Cid,
what would you gain from our misery?
But, with all his holy strength,
may God keep you."
And she went back into the house.

Then the Cid saw
that he would get no privilege from the king. He
turned from the door and galloped through the town,
dismounted at the church of Santa María,
fell upon his knees
and prayed from the heart.
The prayer done,
he rode on,
rode out of the gates
and crossed the Arlanzón by the
bridge near the cathedral.
On the far side of the river,
on the sand of the riverbank,
he had them pitch his tent, and then dismounted.
Mio Cid Ruy Díaz,
who in good hour girded on sword, set
his tent on the rough sand
surrounded by good companions,
when no one would take him in.
So the Cid set down camp
as though he were in the mountains.
In the great city of Burgos, he
was forbidden to buy anything
whatsoever, any provisions,
and no one dared sell him ration enough
to feed a single man
for a single day.

5. Martín Antolínez Comes out of Town With Provisions for the Cid.

Martín Antolínez, that worthy man of Burgos,
supplied the Cid and his men with wine and bread
—all of it from his own stores,
he didn't have to buy them—
so that everyone had plenty of provisions.
The worthy Campeador was pleased,
likewise, all the others with him.
Martín Antolínez spoke then,
you shall hear what he said:
"Hey Campeador,
you were born in a good hour!
Let's stay here tonight,
but let's leave first thing in the morning, for I
shall be reported for having done you a service.
King Alfonso'll
be sore as sin.
If I get away with my life and limb and join you,
sooner or later, the king
'll love me like a friend:
if not, well, I couldn't give a fig
for what I leave behind."

6. The Cid, Without Resources, appeals to the Astuteness of Martín Antolínez.

Mio Cid spoke,
who in good hour
girded on sword:
"You're a stout lance, Martín Antolínez!
And if I live, I'll see your pay is doubled.
Gold and silver, I've spent it all, and you can see
I carry nothing with me, and
I'll need something for all my men.
Since there's no one will supply me freely,
I'll get it by force if necessary.

Look, I've got an idea, see if you like it:
I'll have a pair of chests built, fill them with
sand, so that they're good and heavy,
stud them with great nails,
and cover them with beautifully tooled leather.

7. The Coffers Are Intended to Get Money from Two Burgos Jews

"Let the leather be vermillion and the nails gilded.
Go to Raquel and Vidas quickly
and say to them for me:
'Since I can buy nothing in Burgos
and the king's anger pursues me,
this treasure of mine is too heavy to take with me,
and I want to pawn it for whatever is reasonable.
They should come to get it at night so that the
Christians don't see.'
Let the Lord and all his saints besides
witness I do this unwillingly, there's
nothing else I can do."

8. Martín Antolínez Goes Black to Burgos to Look for the Jews.

Martín Antolínez didn't wait,
he went into Burgos by the gate,
went straight to the castle, though it was late,
and asked for Raquel and Vidas.

9. The Deal between Martín Antolínez and the Jews. They Go to the Cid's Tent. They Carry Away the Trunks of Sand.

Raquel and Vidas were together counting over
what they had earned in profits.
Antolínez came in, all shrewdness.

"Raquel and Vidas, are you there, dear friends?
I want to speak to both of you privately."
No waiting, all three went together
into the back room.
"Raquel and Vidas,
both of you give me your hands, swear
you will not discover it, or me, to either Christian or Moor,
you'll lack for nothing, I'll make you rich forever.
The Campeador went to collect tribute, and
when he saw anything worth the trouble, he
kept it for himself.
He has been accused
and so has come to this.
He has two trunks full of mint
[gold.
You'll understand, then, why the king is angry with him.
He's left houses and palaces, all his inheritance, and these chests
he cannot take with him, someone would sniff them out.
The Campeador will leave them in your hands, and
you lend him in cash whatever is reasonable.
Take the chests and keep them safe, but both of you must
swear mightily and keep your promises, not
to look into the chests for the rest of this year."
Raquel and Vidas
conferred together:
"One has to get something on every piece of business,
and of course we know he took something when
he went into Moorish lands, he got plenty,
and a man who carries money on him doesn't sleep easy.
We'll take both trunks and hide them
where no one will sniff them out.
But tell us how much the Cid wants,
how much
interest will he give us for the whole
[year?"
Martín Antolínez answered and was
[sharp:
"Mio Cid will want
only what is reasonable, ask little of you, and leave

his treasure in your safekeeping. Needy men
are gathering to join him from everywhere,
600 marks are needed."
"We are happy to give them to him."
"Look, it's getting dark, the Cid is under pressure,
let's have the marks right away."
"Whoa," said Raquel and Vidas, "you
don't do business that way.
You do the getting first, and then the giving."
"Good enough," said Antolínez, "come,
let's go together to the Campeador,
and we'll help you,
as is only right, to
load the trunks up, bring them across, and put them somewhere
[safe
where no one will ever know, Christian or Moor."
"A deal," said Raquel and Vidas. "When the trunks are
[here
you'll get the 600 marks."
Martín Antolínez rode off quietly,
[Raquel
and Vidas came along willingly.
He did not take the bridge, instead, crossed by the stream so that
no one in the town of Burgos
would get wind of it.
They reach the tent
of the famous Campeador, enter,
and kiss the Cid's hands.
Mio Cid grinned and spoke to them:
"Hey, Raquel and Vidas, had you forgotten me"?
You know I'm leaving the country, disinherited,
because the king is angry with me. It
looks like you'll be keeping something of mine,
and, so long as you live, you'll never be poor."
Raquel and Vidas kissed the Cid's hands.
Martín Antolínez closed the deal: that
they would lend 600 marks against those chests
and guard them closely till the end of the year;
and to this they gave their promise, and to this swore, that

if they broke their word and opened them before,
mio Cid should not have to give them
a damn cent of interest.
Then, Martín Antolínez:
"Load the trunks up right away,
take them, Raquel and Vidas, and put them somewhere safe.
I'll go with you and bring back the marks, for
mio Cid has to be on the road
tomorrow, before cockcrow."
Loading up the chests—you could see how much they enjoyed [it.
They couldn't hoist them up on the mules' backs,
though both were stalwart men.
They were merry, Raquel and Vidas,
with such a mint.
Neither one,
as long as they lived,
would ever be poor again.

10. The Cid and the Jews Take Leave of One Another. Martín Antolínez Goes Back to Burgos with Them.

Raquel kissed the Cid's hand: "Hey, Campeador!
You girded on sword in a good hour!
You're leaving Castille and going out among strangers,
well, that's your luck, and your profits are large. Cid,
I kiss your hand,
I beg you, let me have a leather Moorish robe,
scarlet and highly prized."
"My pleasure," said the Cid, "from this moment
it's on the order books. And if I'm lucky, I'll
bring it back from there, and if not,
well, count it against the coffers."
Raquel and Vidas carted off the chests.
Martín Antolínez went back to Burgos with them,
arrived at their place discreetly.
In the palace's center
they laid down a prayer rug, and over that

a pure, white sheet, finer than any linen. On
the first throw were 300 silver marks, don
Martín only counted them, didn't
bother to weigh them; the
other 300 they
paid him in gold.
Antolínez had five squires with him
and loaded all of them up.
When the whole thing was done,
now listen to what he said:
"Don Raquel and don Vidas,
the chests are yours. And I,
who managed to get them for you,
well, the
baby wants a new pair of britches."

PETER **COLE**

Samuel Ben Yosef Halevi Hanagid, a/k/a Isma'il Ibn Nagrela (930–1056 CE)

Samuel Hanagid's entry in a *Who's Who in Medieval Poetry* should be enough to prompt any reader's interest in his work: International spice merchant, Jewish Prime Minister of the Moslem state of Granada, battlefield commander of the distinctly non-Jewish and highly successful Granadan army, leader—or *nagid*—of Spanish Jewry from 1034–1056, author of some twenty-two works on grammar and Jewish law (and possibly on the Koran), major patron of Jewish learning in Spain, North Africa, Jerusalem, and Babylonia, and the first major poet of the Hebrew literary renaissance of Moslem Spain or Andalusia. One could add to that the medieval legend of his fairy-tale rise to power—from his humble beginnings as a letter writer and owner of a small spice shop to the series of episodes in which his epistolary and intellectual gifts are discovered by local workers, government officials, and eventually the Granadan king himself. Then for good measure one might throw in the nearly eight centuries of neglect that the bulk of Hanagid's work endured prior to its chance retrieval in 1926 by an English scholar and collector who was travelling through Syria.

What drew me to Hanagid's work, however, was technical in the deepest sense of the term—as one thinks of it, say, in relation to Pindar, or open heart surgery. At an odd, but not inaccessible, angle to the first lyric poetry of modern Europe, here was a poet who yoked secular and religious passion, Hebrew and (often antagonistic) Arabic poetic practice, and a pronounced personal impulse with a sophisticated conception of ornament and literary artifice. Hanagid was a radical master of the "new Andalusian Hebrew poetry," but one whose classical emphases run counter to many of our knee-jerk assumptions regarding experiment in the arts. Developing his peculiarly supple and metallic hybrid-verse, he was neither muffled by the communal language of his religious society, which provided him with his scriptural vocabulary, i.e., his medium; nor did he capitulate to the underlying cultural assumptions of his Moslem host culture, from which he took his quantitative meters and his genres, or his pattern. Instead, he found a way to incorporate both traditions without compromising the specific pressure of the personal in his work. He fused religious impulse with his secular context, and established an architecture

of time in his poems by saturating them with scriptural quotation that refers the reader to past and future at once—in a sense eliminating the present of the poet, but in another establishing his voice.

Translating that voice borders on folly, or is at any rate a questionable enterprise for those who can read the difficult original. Nevertheless it has been for me something of a private Pompeii, and what follows are for the most part "accurate" versions of the Hebrew, by which I mean that nearly every word of the original is accounted for in the English mix. *To translate,* according to one of my dictionaries, is "to bring into the afterworld without causing death." This, in a poetic nutshell, is what I've aimed for—though not without sacrifice, and not without loss.

—P.C.

THE MIRACLE AT SEA

Is there poise for the stumbling and fallen,
or rest for the wandering and lost?
And for me when I slip, or my fault when I fail,
is there offering?

By the lives of all who'd come
to console and assist the stricken,
by the life of each who came
when I was in need and saw me panicked,

could it be there's never respite from anguish,
that desolate land is desolate forever?
But God restores what he levels,
though he keeps his secrets and erases his ways.

Listen to a word and know that not for lightness
does the Lord sustain us on earth,
and take your reversals with an open heart,
silence, and guarded thought.

Harden your ears to the brokers of spirit
and turn your eyes from its whores,
from Hophni at Shilo, or Zimri and the woman
from Midyan, or Onan—and his brother's widow.

Listen to a word and exalt the Lord
in the house and street, when you rise and lie down;
shudder for dread and anxiousness.
Worry, and let awe infuse you

for the God of beginnings unborn and unbearing,
of lasting life without likeness.
Return to his grace
and face him forever through fear and rebuke.

I am the man who went down to the sea
which most of the year is loud.
It was August. I chose to go
when the waves don't break in anger;

and we worked the oars and a wind came up
as over a field of corn,
and the sea, like a servant, did as I asked,
like a maid, and the sky was sapphire—

and the water like butter or virgin oil.
And the sailors told of all that they'd seen
of wonder on board,
and one spoke of a marvelous creature,

and another called it a beast—
and the captain answered:
None of you know of the miracle sea—
you haven't fathomed a thing.

There exists a monster whose name is Karchah,
singular among the abysmal shapes,
it devours all who feed on each other
and kills the survivors with fright.

It overturns ships, and fleets with their crews;
they're flipped in its mouth like a chariot.
He hadn't finished his story
when lowing and raging the creature appeared.

I heard it: thunder or the sound of a throng
seemed still alongside it;
and I looked at its terrible form,
wrought like a fish or book-like Leviathan,

the torturous serpent like a palm tree in stature,
its head huge as a galley with oars,
its face haughty, like a hill,
its eyes like pools,

its spout like a furnace, its brow like a wall,
its mouth wide and deep as a cave;
quenching its thirst it would empty a river
with its lips like swollen wineskin on wineskin,

and between them the hole
as though in a coat of mail.
Its flank was white, its back—green,
its neck like a tower, its belly—a mound,

its fin like a polished sword,
and its scales like a shield made red;
its girth to us seemed like a cliff in the heart
of the sea. And it circled the ship,

though the fin was still,
and swam alongside it and rose on its tail,
like a cedar or climbing vine.
Then everyone's heart melted like wax,

or like water, and the whirlpool engulfed us.
And I calmed and steadied my soul,
as the lamb on the day of her slaughter goes dumb,
and called on my Lord,

as others beside me called on their own,
like Ashemah. . .And I said:
In truth, and one way or another,
trouble entraps the guilty soul;

if Jonah was swallowed up by the sea
and vomited onto the land
in his righteousness—what of me?
My Lord, protect me, who slept but awakes.

If this is the work of my own two hands,
forgive me my wrongs. . . .
Then it sank in the dark of the sea,
like a soldier that God had thrown in its parting;

but under the ship it threatened,
as our hearts died, our breath failing.
And the Lord rebuked the being,
for the moment returned to its depth—

the little worms
saved on a pitch-covered bough.
He raised the dead from Sheol,
and saved the swallowed with a hand held high.

The nautical wizards were astonished, and asked
how it could happen—
with their ships trapped by Karchah, the accursed!
And I told them:

Such is deliverance for those who know
the great glory of the Lord in His fullness.
He sends salvation to those who admit him,
and vengeance to those who provoke his wrath.

The sea is His, and all its creatures,
and the waters below, which are vast;
he hangs them on nothingness.
What is a beast beside the Rock

who shaped it and granted it breath,
then endowed it with power?
I thank the Lord with a song of redemption
my mouth will remember,

and acknowledge the Rock beyond creation,
without completion,
and grant the truth of resurrection—
that the dead will arise from dust;

that the Book of Moses we have in our hands
is true and composed with perfection;
that the words of the sages are worthy
and their study is sweet—

and reward for the righteous will follow,
as the dead for their sins in secret
receive their recompense;
that the Lord rules—over land and sea

and the sky and Great Bear above;
that His fear in the lines of my face is drawn,
and His Law in my blood assumed.

THE EARTHQUAKE (1047)

My shepherd, I'm still where I lie
and look out over your greatness;
my mouth speaks of your miracles,
my tongue gives voice to your marvelous acts.
Over the earth's place and foundation
your hand has ruled:
you've crushed the groves in season,
the vineyard's fruit, the fig in flower.

How could a person sin when he sees
the contortions of each man's journey?
God to the godless delivers him
and casts him into a wicked man's hand.
You drive the soul like a leaf from its vine
as the harp is thrummed you drive it,
and march across the earth's back,
then fold it up like a robe.

He when He pleases who brings out the sun
and lights the hills with fire
ripples the mountains like wind
rippling spikes of wheat in a field.
He causes the land to skip like a calf,
its streams like a wild young ox;
His wrath twists the foundations
like hikers through rugged terrain.

I heard it—and my stomach churned;
at the voice of the rushing I struggled.
Remembering now how it happened
my heart balks and I tremble:
You rose by dark to shake the earth
in the blackness of night and the gloom,
you turned the land on its head like a bowl;
its peaks beneath us buckled.

He who remembers the fear of that night
grows weary of life in his soul;
it gathered a terror so great
the highest among us were humbled.
"Twice, yea thrice," God touched the earth,
and, like a drunkard it toppled.
The quake shook like a troop
spreading out in its raid on a city—

and hearts gave way as it whitened the hair
of women whose hearts were young;
and the pillars of heaven weakened,
the foundations of earth were destroyed;
its walls pressed up on each other,
the highest tower came down,
and all the dwellings were shaken:
they trembled in fear of the Lord.

Buildings firmly anchored in earth
weren't spared from destruction;
the city's walls were brought to the ground,
stricken—like beaten olives.
Infants nursing slipped from their mothers
and groped for their weakened grasp;
they were scared, and no one knew what to do.
The righteous woman was there with the shrew.

The sound of rupture came from the roofs
like a woman ripping her flesh,
mourning the loss of her only son.
Home collapsed on neighboring home,
acacia and cedar fell at their roots;
the townspeople wallowed in earth
like a sword wrapped in a cloth—
and every standing thing bowed down.

The chambermaid fell on the bed she had changed;
the face of each lady
deep in her chamber was covered in fear;
hearts with labor were straining

like mothers bearing their sons;
and the soul of each man inside him
tossed like a ship on the waves,
as the men huddled in terrified crowds

confessing their sins, and saying:
"So the Lord's congregation is judged
which neither judged the afflicted and poor,
nor sated itself—
or grew coarse in its being or fat in its soul;
it didn't grow thick and fat and kick at the Lord."
Then we said: "Our end has come,
and the hand of disaster sweeps the world."

It moved from west to east
it didn't swerve from its path.
It gave us to drink from the waters of ruin
and fed us its stew of death.
And then—after He'd crushed it,
He steadied the earth
to leave us a name and a remnant,
to save us for a great deliverance.

He bound the people in a circle of joy,
and stripped their jacket of fear.
All through the night their song was heard,
and thanks for the people's deliverance—
for salvation and the robe of justice
the hand of the Lord had bestowed.
May you always lift your hand
high to redeem us with mercy, our Rock!

Lord who floats the land over sea,
who stretches the north over empty space
and hangs the earth on nothingness,
you've given sentence
to be heard from the heavens:
the earth heard and grew still.
You shook the earth and cleft it:
now heal its wound, for it totters.

Yehuda Halevi (c. 1075–1141)

BEFORE DEPARTURE

Errant night, abide, adjourn your circuit,
for those I love are leaving tomorrow;
set your course softly, drape the early glow
in ravens' wings—and as for my tears,
turn them to storm and stop their caravan,
prevent its roaming: Let my tormented
heart, with its black cloud, foreshadow
their vision of the coming dawn; venomous
breath, issue forth with my sighs to strike
the heart of the kindling flame until they
realize how intricate desertion of my tent
is—until a day I myself have chosen.

AXIOM:

if I'm shadowed by the very wind that
touches her lips and makes her body quiver

(and)

if the clouds bear her my greetings

(then),

like her loins, so her icy core might melt:

O gazelle / you
who chose arctic
frost as your
nesting place—
pity this hunter /
his plight to
vanish in ice

LOVE POEM

Come gently, heart adamant / hips pliant:
treat me gently, till I bow
before you, face to the ground!

It was just my eyes you abducted—
surely I was pure of heart
even if my eyes were not:

quick—let them cull the mingled seed of
rose and lily sown along your body.

I rake the fire of your cheeks to put out fire with fire.
The instant I thirst, it's there I find water.
I would suck your red lips ablaze like glowing coals
and use my jaws as tongs. My life hangs between two
scarlet threads, my death in evening's tresses.

Now I find the nights are endless, though once
no darkness came between the days. Time was my wish.
Like clay in my hands. And the Zodiac, like a potters wheel.

POEM IN PARTS:

Pity the heart, my lovely doe,
you've always lived in. Know
the day you stray from me will
be my end. Even now, as my eyes
dare spy your beauty, serpents
guarding your cheeks sting me,
for their venom is drawn from
fire and I am banished by them.

She hooked my heart in
the crescents resting over
her heart, though made of
stone, it engendered two
apples, to the right and
left. Taut as lance heads,
her nipples sting my heart:
though they've not come near
me, their mouths have drunk
my blood—and felt no shame.

Spinning one day like a drunkard from
the wine of her favors, envoys came
bearing me greetings and complaints;
on their return she pleaded: "Messengers

of peace, bear me such words
again and again. My heart is
seduced, my spirit renewed."

One day my hands were
grazing in her garden
caressing her breasts

and she said: "Let
your hands go loose
I'm still unseasoned!

Don't touch, my friend.
I don't care for abuse.

My breasts are full,
soft, and delicate.

Enough, I'll refuse
you, one and all."

LOVE SONG

The night my love revealed
her form to me, her cheeks
ablaze, her hair a veil,
golden as topaz covering
a moist brow of crystal—

she resembled the sun's
ascent, spreading crimson
in a lustrous blaze across
the clouds of twilight.

AN EXCHANGE BETWEEN LEVI IBN AL-TABBAN AND YEHUDA HALEVI

Levi Ibn al-Tabban: The Fountain of Life

My intent is to journey toward
the source of life, ere the days
return me to the clay I once was.
If only my living soul, perpetually
shadowing wind, could gather enough
wit to know it alone forms my share of
worldly riches, my heart might be alert
enough to grasp the epilogue, for the day
of lasting slumber signals my one awakening:
the day He addresses my labors and seeks
explanation is the day He reclaims
as His my breath and my spirit.

The Reply: Life's Source

Toward life's true source I run,
fleeing barren senseless days, to
see my King's visage my one intent:
only before him do I tremble, I
exalt no other—if I but beheld
him in a dream I would sleep an
endless sleep and never rise—
having gazed at his face within
my heart's core, my eyes would
no longer seek vision without.

HARRIS **LENOWITZ**

Bindings and Whispers

If you want to make something, you can pretend there is no past, neither a past of yours or of the others. But if you pretend that there is a past and look back, or even walk backwards, the past will come catch up with you. Some friends of yours will see the two of you from the back, walking hand in hand. They will have a picture before them of you walking up a sunny road under autumn trees.

One of my central interests is in the symbolic use of the Hebrew language. I am entranced by gematria (word=sum=another word of the same sum) and equally by micrography (pictures made up of words written very small) and other ways of moving the Hebrew language and its characters around in metalinguistic patterns. The utterly surprising and convincing meanings that can be read within a simple phrase of Hebrew through gematria or other codes make connections between me and others and worlds beyond, hidden within the language. The same is true of the rich sound patterns of the *piyut* with its heavy, repetitive rhymes and almost-meaningful words and sentences made up out of quite idiosyncratic understandings of what's possible and permitted in the language. The shapes of the letters themselves and the way they look in arrangements have also served as conduits to higher, nearly inexpressible, just barely suggestible perceptions. Written amulets bring together the visual and the incantatory uses of the language in an attempt to go beyond or through the language to its secrets and to influence the secret world and its workings.

I studied traditional scribal techniques (for writing Torahs and *tefillin* and *mezuzot*, *not* amulets) three nights a week for several months in Jerusalem in the winter of 1981. The course was one organized by the Ministry of Religion. Our teacher was a true master with a lovely, clear, elegant Sefardi hand, though he did all the other styles beautifully as well. He was a Yemenite, but had learned his trade in Israel. Most of the other men in the class were North African or French immigrants. The pens we learned to make and use were whittled from bamboo blanks that the teacher provided. Ashkenazi scribes use quill pens, from goose feathers for the most part; traditional Sefardi scribes use cane or bamboo pens. (I was

attracted to the Sefardi pen because I have always liked bamboo and because the bamboo or cane pen bears none of the stigma of the slaughtered animal. There was nothing to be done about the parchment.)

I have studied amulets, especially Jewish ones and I have visited amulet makers and received amulets. (One which I received in 1989 which the scribe made to help bring me and my wife "together" failed, but then he had told me to burn it when she and I rejoined and I couldn't bring myself to do that.) When I came to spend a sabbatical at UCSD this year I set out to use the techniques and tools I had acquired to study more about amulets and make some, not for use but to see what would come of doing it.

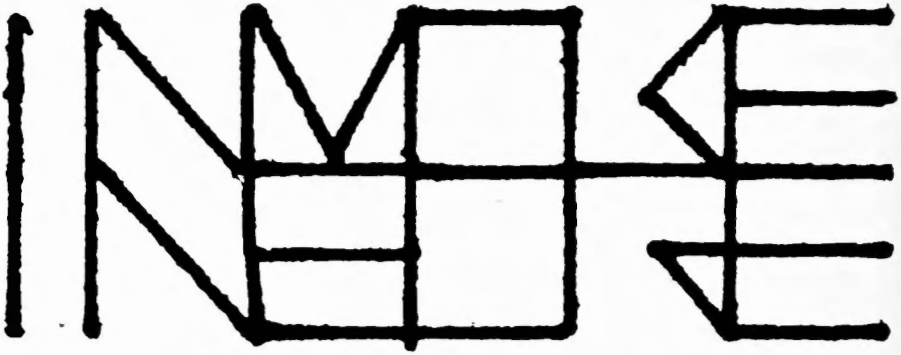
Amulets (Hebrew, *qeme'ot* = bindings, *lehashim* = whispers) register experience. An amulet-maker is judged by the success of his amulets, so whether the object is written or found, blue or red stones or golden plaques, only coincidence stands behind the reputation of all amulets and that coincidence plays a role in the making, even though most texts and designs on amulets are traditional. (Jewish amulets are generally famous texts; a few incorporate non-verbal designs; many include words only vaguely related to the alphabet and grammar of the non-amuletic language.) A very long tradition may support the cause-effect relationship for the individual who requests an amulet to effect some positive future. For example, we know that Phoenicians were the first people to use a metal hand as an amulet but we don't know what purpose it was intended to serve. Other Mediterranean cultures have used the same shape at various times since the second millennium, each placing the symbol within its own context of belief. (Moslems refer to it as the Hand of Fatima, favored daughter of the prophet; Jews add a divine name, written in Hebrew.) Not only does the amulet lose its original signification in the process of time, its reputation even outwears the unfortunate experiences of the individuals who have chosen or received it. The commitment endures. Rather than discard an amulet as useless, people explain its failure as a success in limiting disaster or in providing that which was more necessary than what was sought. An automobile protected by an amulet may be wrecked but the automobile's owner will say that the wreck might have been much worse if not for the amulet. A prolonged illness keeps a child out of the Russian army. The experience which amulets register is faith.

Receiving an amulet from a maker with a reputation, or finding one and asserting its power makes it work for its owner. An unusual and threatening set of circumstances generally precedes its possession. In desperation the one who takes it up hopes for a positive outcome. Doing what he can to gain favor with fate through the amulet, he stakes his hopes on *its* power. The individuality of the amulet comes to replace his own. He binds it on

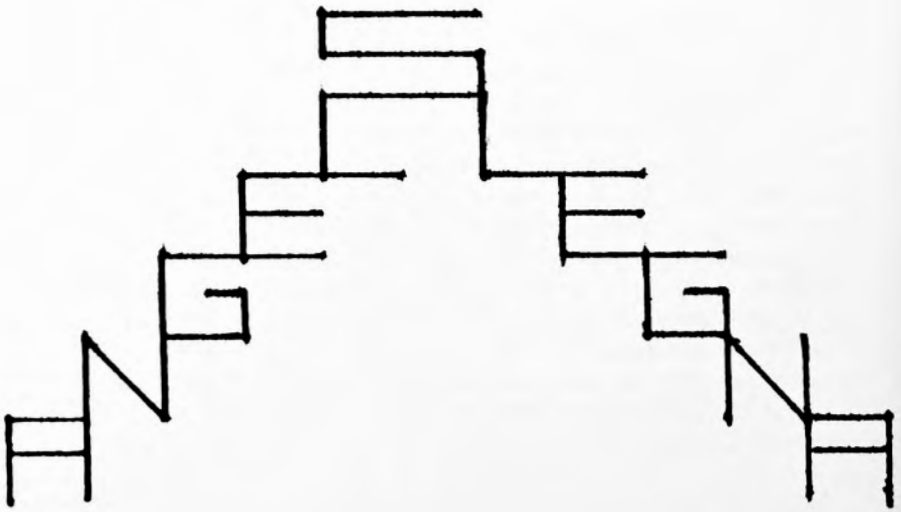
and it binds him. He whispers to it and listens closely as it responds. The experience which amulets register is subjection.

At the time of need any rare feature suffices for the amulet to find its power in the eye of the needy. Tradition marks something rare as possessing power and one may pick up an amulet and hold on to it before it is called for. The whole mystery is that the need for the amulet has made its presence known to two: to the one who hires the maker or takes the stone up or the bone or the coin or the hair ball, and to providence. The maker of an amulet for Jews, a scribe who will write out ancient and indecipherable angel names, trace odd figures and accurately inscribe letters from an alphabet no one knows, asks the seeker questions and requires his submission. The heart of the matter is fear. The scribe announces that one need not fear this or that. Instructions and the inscription of one's name in the amulet and a prayer offered by the scribe as he rests a holy book on the lowered head of the supplicant follow the assertion that fear is the issue. One assents to it all. The amulet, cast up from the experience, serves to keep one wary. As it hangs from one's neck or is bound on one's arm or supports the house under which it lies buried it binds up the fear. The amulet registers fear.

To regather the emotion of receiving an amulet, these texts are suggestive and surprising I hope, and, in their design, confusing and intriguing. They may allow the surprising world to come up by calming what lies on the surface. They deploy arrangements of letters and words and phrases as shapes, magic squares and other sleights from the tradition of the Hebrew amulet. Some have an oral dimension as well and should be whispered, like the fifth one. (It is made of the two triangles of the Magen David pulled apart, the upper one in English, the lower in Hebrew.) They are the first in the Jewish tradition to be made in English. While I was making them, I was surprised by the way things kept working out. In the first good one I got, the seventh here, it just came out that both the farthest horizontal and vertical line ended in the Latin *ex*, hurling out the demons. In the word-rectangle against snakes, the third here, (the title comes from a Coptic amulet), *Eve* appeared in the simple word *Save* and with her a salutation, *Ave*, and with the angular and serpentine letter *S*, the snake, and with the angularity a deltoid letter *A* and behind it all, the text from a Ugaritic ritual I had taught the year before, an offering of snakes to the goddess. I became convinced that the past had walked right up and caught hold of my hand. These amulets register those other amulets it is true, but a present partnership makes them.

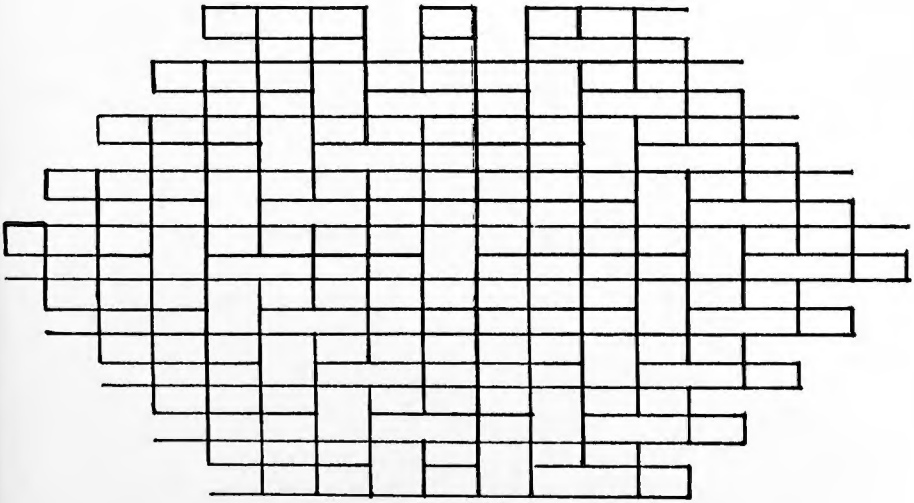


1. Bringing angels (INVOKE, INSURE)

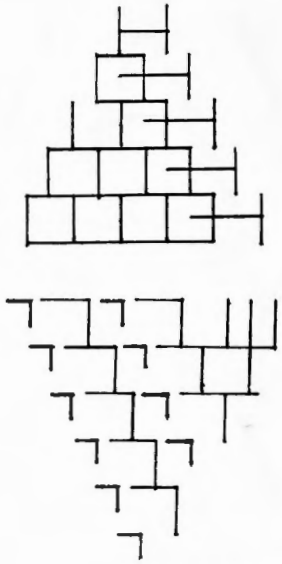


2. Against the fear of heights (ANGELS) (Gen. 28.12)

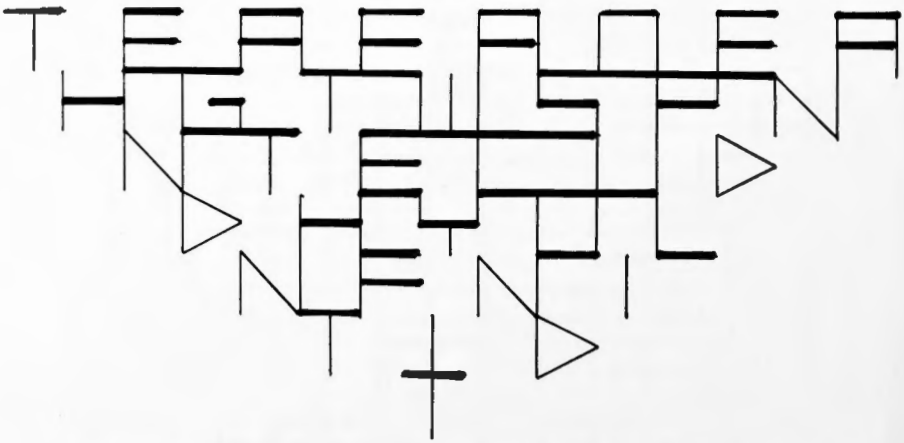
3. To remove from her the snake (SAVE EVE)



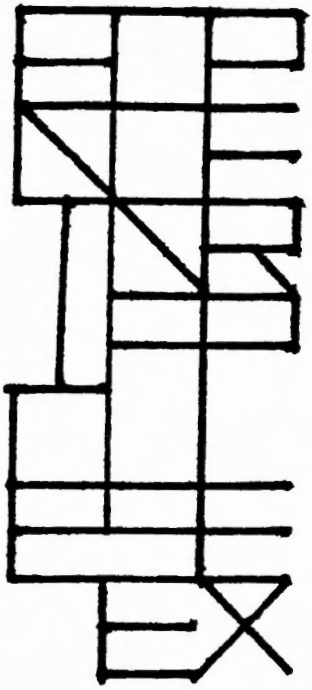
4. Constancy (CEASELESS)



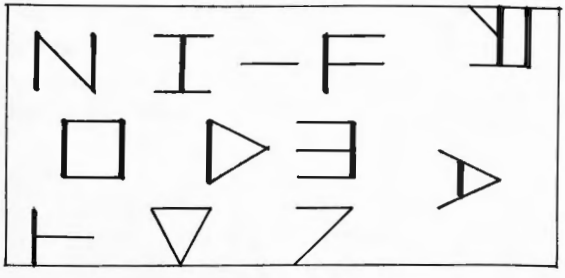
5. To break up a cough (COUGH/SHAVRIRI) (TB Pes. 112a and Sefer Raziel)

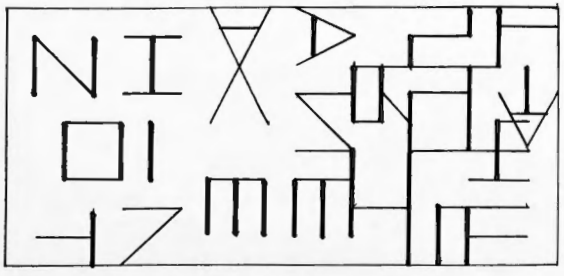


6. Protect the house (THE GATE WAS OPEN AND THEY COULDN'T FIND IT) (Gen. 19.11, after Y. de la Reina)



7. Against demons (ENTICE, CONFUSE, PERPLEX)





8. Something lost (NOT HIDDEN, FAR; NOT IN HEAVEN, EARTH, ACROSS THE SEA) (Deut. 30.12 and Sefer Raziel)

YVES **DI MANNO**

Kambuja:
Stelae from the Khmer Empire

(Tr. by Nathaniel Tarn)

Kambuja (Paris: Flammarion, 1992) is a work composed over the years by a poet-scholar who has never been to Cambodia or learned Sanskrit or Old Khmer but has had intense sympathy for the people, their history and traditions. The book is made up mainly of translations from the French part of George Coedes's eight volume *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (Hanoi-Paris, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient, 1937-1966), a work which I could just about have acquired as a student but alas did not. From this huge corpus, di Manno took fragments and composed "elective montages" in which he tried to remain true to his sources while making *them* true to a poetics influenced by Pound and Rothenberg as well as, in France, Rossi and Hocquard. He elaborates on this in a postface. *Kambuja* also provides source information re the original stelae and inscriptions.

On meeting with *Kambuja*, I had at first thought of an attempt to continue these transferences with a group of poets in a variety of languages. This, as might have been expected, proved impractical. Here then are three fragments, two short sections and nine long sections done according to my lights directly from di Manno's versions.

—N.T.

from TEMPLE SERVANTS

Praised be
the queen who

despite these
declining times

bears
the burden of

the earth
like a moon-

finger
sustains night's

beauty

from SUCH ARE THE DEEDS

he who goes north
must in the first place
dismount his chariot
and abandon
the protection of
the parasols

men and women of substance
desiring to honor
the gods may enter
with offerings
proportional to
their fortune

the poorest should they be rich
in faith
may enter
with a simple
flower

from SUCH ARE THE DEEDS

you who
incarnate yourselves

into a glory
survives you

ever
ready even

to sacrifice
your life to

your duty
how could you

possibly
lust for the god's

possessions?

SHADOW

love
is consummated

the moon
is stained

now: how to find

the beauty
necessary

to my
creation?

RESIN CAMPHOR SUGAR

homage to the buddha
who has the forms
of matter

nature and mind
while being still
impersonal

there was a king
surpassing all princes
feared by his enemies

and whose great glory
shone among the land's
four corners

but sustenance
the principle of life
goes out of stock

and the world
dies
in the last era

:thus
his people
perished

seeing that the earth
was oppressed
by death

he wanted to find the simple
which would return to mortals
their immortality

he suffered
from his subjects' ills
more than his own

(for it is public
sorrow
which torments a king)

and he explained
away the illnesses
by the times' evil will

thus be built here
this hospital
this temple

where the four castes
could be
looked after

there will be two doctors
assisted by two nurses
with the right to lodgings

two druggists responsible
for distributing remedies
two cooks

with the right to fuels
and charged with the upkeep
of lawns

two persons responsible
for the distribution of leaves
and chopsticks

fourteen guardians
charged with administering
the remedies

two rice pounders
totalling: eight women
two per housing unit

the total number
of assistants thus being
thirty two

the rice which is part
of the offering is fixed
at one bushel per day

sacrificial left-overs
will be daily distributed
to the patients

three times a year
on the full-moon day
of the feast of the dead

and the summer solstice
what follows will be taken
from the royal storehouses:

a woven garment
with red border
and six white garments

a tallow torch
four portions of honey and
three of sesame

a remedy with a pepper
and cumin powder base
resin camphor sugar

though he walks first
among the elite
the king

is a petitioner here
thinking of the welfare
of his subjects

and he begs forever
the future sovereigns
of Cambodia

"the good work I have done
you must preserve it
for it is yours

officials
charged with taxation
will not be sent here

the inhabitants of this hospice
even if habitually guilty
must not be punished

but that those
who torment the living
be punished without mercy

all those beings plunged
in the ocean of
existences

may I save them from it
by the value
of this donation!

may the Khmer kings
who cleave to the good
protect my foundation

and may they
and their lineage
attain the place

of deliverance
where there is no longer
any sickness!

and in the company
of celestial dancers
may they illuminate

the sacred
merit
which is due to me. . ."

BAD DREAMS

roots branches trunks
oh eternal

tree king
fortunate
refuge
prodigal with fruit

may neither lightning nor the axe
fire nor wind
nor king nor maddened
elephant

bring about your ruin

eyelids tremble
eyes narrow

bad dreams
bad visions

o fig tree deliver from these ills

both men
and gods

small men chipping—
writing on walls

for Demosthenes Agrafiotis

THE STONES OF DELFI (I)

1
the stones speak

2
the stones laugh

3
he—like all poets—
has a taste for stones

THE FUNERAL

1
the bull stretched
on a table

a musician
with 2 flutes
leading a crowd
of women

& the priestess
pouring blood
into a bowl

2
a lady with a crown
brings blood
in buckets

hands them to another
lady
who empties them

between the double
ax blades
birds are perching on

3
behind them
a musician comes
playing a lute with
7 strings

& 3 men walking in
the opposite
direction, holding pictures of
small animals, a boat

the dead man watching
from his tomb
behind the altar

4
a chariot
drawn by horses

another drawn by griffins

& behind each walk
2 women

AT MYKINES

1
in the royal house
a fire pit & smoke hole
at the center

around which men would sit
the walls renewed with paintings
every year

with goat bells somewhere
in the distance

2
with goat bells somewhere
in the distance

or goblins of these mountains
little people

at this time of year

3
making echoes from its walls
we look for goats

invisible, whose lonely bells
are clanging in the air

4
snowcapped arcadia
beyond small puffs of smoke
marking the Argive plain

where we were too+

THE STONES OF DELFI (II)

here is an edge to stone,
here is a cry with splinters driven
into the bone the clavicle

responding in pain
here where the pain is nearly solid
gravitates toward stone itself

the voice in stone is letters
broken marks the small men chipping
writing on the walls

will build a world in stone
where we can live & find it
beautiful & lonely

+I too have been there

the mark of higher cultures
but once shattered into shapes
becomes so primary

it takes your breath away
—those loplop columns
arising toward the sky at delfi

no civic order merely
architecture but the promise of
new wildernesses

where the stones speak
the stones laugh
towering above their witnesses

the stones drop to the earth
we sow them into place
& watch them grow

like giants
broken bodies of our pasts
false signatures

inscribed by wars
that never end
that leave a chaos always

a paradise of stone

THE WOMEN (1)

women squeezing nipples

•

a nipple like a star

THE WOMEN (2)

for Man Ray

a woman like a violin

•

with folded arms

THE WOMEN (3)

two breasts in gold:
gold eyes

THE WOMEN (4)

snakes crawling up her arms
they stretch their heads toward her tiara
on which a panther sits

THE WOMEN (5)

women standing with
raised arms—
birds flying from their heads
adorned with pods
of poppies

THE WOMEN (6)

a woman on a swing

•

a sacred tree
with doves

THE WOMEN (7)

dancing legs

HANDS

for Lizzie Calligas

looking at her hand
she saw an eye
& that the eye was crying
water had slid between her fingers
red with rust
& made a pressure she could only ease
by tonguing licking up
the sweet red juices
& a hand was also in the sky
beside the sun & over it
it flew spun sideways
upside down
until it brought the night to pass
"I live with hands"
the man thought
sitting in her light
& reached down to his ankles
snapped the lines
that held the other's soul in place
with hands, he thought,
the secret is Elefsis
where the daughter dropt into the earth
oh seed, oh secret eikon
burnt into my hand
like stigma, like stigmata
rays of sunlight

on the flesh
or into it
& the words turn cold & hard like steel
that cuts the page
then rides across our bellies
like a knife
over whatever part of us
the life will flow from seedings
that reach us from a wasted dream
to make a poem of seedings
like poems & photographs of hands
all of us share & think
"how classical it is
"how it revolves & leaves us hanging
"this reminiscence of our lives
"alive & dead

ANDREW **SCHELLING**

Hobson-Jobson: An Account of Sanskrit Poetics in Homage to John Cage

In the boundless samsara of poetry,
the poet is the sole and true creator.
—Abhinavagupta

The authors are in eternity—
—William Blake

There are daemons that inhabit language. They hide themselves in the articulations and durations of speech, in the twisty corridors of syntax, behind syllables and sounds blocked out like the precincts of an ancient sprawling city. Something in the formal devices of poetry calls them forth. They make known their presences by swift alterations in the physical and emotional make-up of readers and writers of poetry. For millennia this has been know as *possession*. In the last century poetry has often seemed just a step or two ahead of madness.

These inhabitants of language maintain a close but fragile relationship to recognizable and namable conditions—inner states we call affection, fear, humor, rage. But the daemons differ from these like bodies from shadows. Whereas those named emotions illuminate, confuse, stupefy, elate us by turns—and ultimately consume us in their flames—the conditions encountered in poetry clarify, regulate and focus the uncertainties. They confront the reader of poetry with a terrifying and ecstatic stability. Through their agency one encounters the non-paraphrasable orders of experience. Here, in that twilight where each word uttered may suggest three or more meanings, "the self meets the Self."

In deference to the untamability of these daemons, poetry takes what yogins call *the left-hand path*. Its practitioners keep regular company with occult realms of study, the speculative sciences, traditions of charm, spell, curse, and the valor of hard-won insight. Maybe this is why poets seem obsessed with professions of excess: travel, warfare, drug ingestion, prostitution & gambling—as well as with all sorts of alternative, unpopular

and non-coercive erotics. Whole traditions have developed around love affairs that sidestep or ignore social convention—from the troubadours of Provence to the Sahajiya of Bengal, poets are "salted with fire." Poetry pursues lines of inquiry ordinarily regarded as suspect, elliptical, non-negotiable or commercially untenable. Unfamiliar and frequently deceitful terrain confronts writer and reader alike.

No one visible up ahead
no one approaches
from behind.
Not a footprint on the road.
Am I alone?
Now it is clear—
the path the ancient
poets opened
is choked with brush,
and I've long since left
the public thoroughfare.

—Dharmakirti

To what can one resort for guidance? *Poetics* becomes compass, map, machete and waterbottle. There is nothing abstract about this business. Nor is it speculative except in the most pragmatic terms, and poetics is decidedly not some explanatory device arrived at after the fact.

Poetics: sleights of hand and word, a bag of tricks like Krazy Kat's: a functional toolkit that "leads up to the next poem." Each writer fits him or herself out with those implements, found or forged, which deviate language from its habitual rounds.

Poets in India have known this deviancy by a Sanskrit term: *sandhyabasha*, "twilight speech"—language lit by the mixed incandescence of night and day—the place of fearful sounds and strange inscribed ciphers. The language of negative capability, negotiating that realm of endless contraries—the heavens and hells we call Mind.

From nomadic Indo-European tribes of four millennia ago, to the classical court poets who fashioned verse of an almost painful erotic delicacy, the *siddhas* ("accomplished ones"—wizards, masters) who worked the Sanskrit language equipped themselves with a remarkable toolkit—a toolkit specifically fitted out for delving into realms where articulate language unlocks the most explosive inward conditions. In India, long possessed of

a genius for scientific scrutiny and inventive taxonomy, poetics underwent a bone-chewing process of classification. But poets and critics kept one eye unwaveringly focused on the effect poetry generates within its practitioners—within those who read, write, recite or receive it. What interested the poet was how the formal operations of a poem—"the bride adorns herself for her beloved"—induce swift, decisive, and physiological transformations. Whether poets considered such transformations private or public, personal or political, they sought in poetry only that which alters its practitioners.

On its own, the human person is a comparatively unformed thing—in anthropological terms *uncooked*—unadorned. Poetic diction, language wrought to its uttermost, is principle among those arts which cook or cultivate the language-using animal.

Simple, like the taste of a complex dish.

To know your ingredients and serve them up. Or in twilight terms, how sounds and written ciphers flush forth the wild shy daemons.

• • •

"The Self of poetry is *rasa*," wrote Abhinavagupta, 10th century Kashmiri wizard of poetics and yoga.

Rasa, the key term in Sanskrit poetics, seizes a constellation of ideas and sets them in motion—ideas for which our hungrily inventive American *patois* has not yet naturalized a term. Let us add *rasa* alongside a fistful of other *Hobson-Jobsons*, colloquial Anglo-Indian words that have slipped the linguistic boundaries, infiltrating our language from South Asia—and without which our language would seem pointlessly deficient:

yoga	karma	bandana
guru	jungle	pariah
muster	nirvana	jackal

Rasa. Old word that ranges. At its source it means "sap, juice, nectar, semen, fluid." By extension—"seasoning, essence, savor, taste." It comes close to what old Gaelic called *uisquebaugh*, water of life. The ancient Celts seasoned or spiked their "whiskey" with plants and flavors—they made it quick, or spiritous. What simples and herbs did they stir in the brew?

And in India *rasa* certainly bears—across the gap of a millennium or two—

a distinct connection to Vedic *Soma*. 1700 B.C.E. *Soma* was the milk of existence—a drink, a plant, a god, the moon—a mysterious lunar liquid identified on Earth with an herb or root, a leaf or mushroom, no modern Vedic scholar or ethnobotanist has convincingly identified. From the *Soma* plant came a whiskey, a complex decoction, drunk by the Indo-European horse-and-chariot nomads who coming out of Central Asia settled east of the Indus River. Once drunk, *Soma* transfigured whoever ingested it into a poet tongue'd with Divine inspiration. The men and women who composed and arranged into books the so-called hymns of the *Rig Veda* claim they merely took what they heard, gathering "from the air a live tradition"—it was *Soma* that made them the gift. It got them out of their heads and into poetry.

About 1000 B.C.E. *Soma* vanished from use in India (source dried up, or literalist priests led an inquisition against spirited poets, or somebody held the secret too tight and forgot to impart it before dying—nobody knows). It had been for the cognoscenti the potent *instigator* of poetic vision, drunk in a context of ritual wordcraft. *Rasa* by contrast is no instigator. When the full implications of *rasa* were fleshed out 2000 years later by Abhinavagupta, it appeared the *outcome* of the poetic act—"fluid" or "come" by metaphoric extension. Not the transformation that distills poetry, but the resultant poetic juice.

Or spirit juice—tasted through language. *Rasa is the direct non-paraphrasable experience of bedrock existence.* Poetry wakes it not through paraphrase but through wizardry. So immediate the physiological impact of *rasa*, poets likened it to the sense of taste, distinguishing eight flavors of *rasa*, and naming them after their transitory shadows the emotions: the erotic, the comic, the furious, the compassionate, the heroic, the wondrous, the repulsive, the horrific. To this list some add a ninth—the spiritually tranquil.

* * *

To my knowledge the single considered application of *rasa* to American art was attempted by John Cage. Cage predicated his music of the mid to late forties—in particular the *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*—upon "the nine permanent emotions" or *rasas*. (He accepted the disputed ninth, the quiescent, into his music.) While most of the Occident still clung to a dying colonialism and observed an impassible barrier between east and west, Cage found in the writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy irrefutable evidence that no such border existed in the mind-born worlds of art. On his own he had located rhythmic structures similar to Indian *tala*, but

Coomaraswamy's writing provided him with the inward mapping called *rasa*. In 1947 his friend Gita Sarabhai told him that her own music teacher in India had declared the purpose of music to be, "to sober and quiet the mind, thus rendering it susceptible to divine influences."

Yet in the early fifties, when Cage attended Suzuki Daisetz's lectures on Zen Buddhism at Columbia University, a direct pursuit of the permanent emotions began to seem a less compelling method of awakening "divine influences" than certain alternative methods that Suzuki's Zen pointed towards. Though he abandoned composing with an evocation of *rasa* as his explicit method, the purpose of music did not alter for him—he merely refined his craft. The accomplished hunter leaves off tracking his prey and positions himself in a blind along the animal's path. Now he need only await its arrival--*providing the song he carries is well-made.*

In his later years Cage would no longer discuss the manner in which the *rasas* operated in those early works. His music does not anyhow lend itself to paraphrase, nor do his writings. Yet in *Themes & Variations*, texts for performance prepared in 1980 and published in 1982, he included among his fundamental concepts the "permanent emotions" of Sanskrit poetics. These aesthetic intelligences occur on a list of 110 terms, quotes and ideas—the toolkit he'd developed over the course of his life—from which he drew mesostic text by chance operation.

Oddly, it is Cage's renunciation of the formal pursuit of *rasa* and his corresponding adoption of chance operation (the hunter who waits), that demonstrates so incontrovertibly that the "authors" of verse dwell many places beneath, beyond or beside the poet's personal volition. Those are pearls that were his eyes. Call them what you will—daemons, flavors, angelic powers, *rasas*—the poetic intelligences pervade an immense mutable web that weaves its way through everyone: Language. When they appear they display a playfulness, a mutable wisdom attributable to no one man or woman. Tens of thousands of years of linguistic experiment emerge in their gestures.

The writer's task, one suspects, is but to entice them to an open field:

oBlige
a ceRtain
renunciatiOn of likes and dislikes

of What
caN you say

. . . . .

coMes
indiA

Re—

refleCt

wE say
we go to the same pLace

. . . . .

(*from* Themes & Variations)

ROSMARIE **WALDROP**

from A Key Into the Language of America

A Key into the Language of America takes its title, chapter sequence, and many quotations from Roger Williams's book of 1643 with the same title. Ostensibly a Narragansett phrasebook, Williams's book is much more: a sympathetic presentation of Indian customs, the first I know of. More than that: each chapter ends with a moralizing poem in which the Indians become a mirror held up to the Christians:

> "The courteous Pagan shall condemne
> uncourteous Englishmen."

I was intrigued by the form of this book, which mixes prose, vocabulary lists, and verse in every chapter.

I also identify with both sides in the clash of Indians and Europeans. As a woman and a poet, I am part of a marginalized, "conquered" minority. On the other hand, having come to this country as a well-educated Caucasian I have been part of the privileged, of the "conquerors."

The initial prose sections of each chapter try to get at the clash of Indian and European cultures by a violent collage of heterogeneous elements. Roger Williams's voice will be recognizable by its archaic syntax and vocabulary, the latter printed in boldface. There is an additional clash of the values of the 18th century settlers and our twentieth century position of hindsight.

Another theme is the relation of conquest and gender. The colonization of America put the very "male" Indian culture in the position of the conquered female, part of the land that was considered there to be "taken." To reinforce this theme, every chapter adds a narrative section in italics, in the voice of a young woman, ambivalent about her sex and position among the conquerors.

The word lists and poems play across both themes. Most of the word lists are suggested by the chapter title, either by its semantic field or the sound of its words (e.g. "fission" in the chapter on fishing).

All in all, my book is a modern immigrant's reaction to the complex make-up of my adopted country.

—R.W.

CONCERNING THEIR COYNE

Indians are ignorant of Europe's coyne yet call it *Monéash* and notice changes in the price of beaver, somnambulism and songs of myself. Their own is either white, which they call ***Wompam***, or black, ***Suckáuboch***, made of shellfish and twice as valuable, **hung about the neck** instead of our millstones. **They bring down all their sorts of furs** and trade them for the wish to live, the wish to die, the wish to kill, the wish to be had.

cuneiform
coiffure
coney

I learned that my face belonged to a covert system of exchange since the mirror showed me a landscape requiring diffidence, and only in nightmares could I find identity or denouement. At every street corner, I exaggerated my bad character in hopes of being contradicted, but only caused an epidemic of mothers covering their faces while exposing private parts.

legal and tender
a condition called
darling dear or ***Netop***
which might as well purchase emotion
as yield interest in
I must explain my body
does not differ

OF DEBTS & TRUSTING

They are desirous to come into debt and have bequeathed the habit. ***Nowemacaûnash nitteaùquash. I Was Faine to Spend My Money in My Sicknesse*** is a **common and, they think, most satisfying answer** since promises applied to parts of speech have no effect, but a priest's pocket conjures paralysis, convulsions, detritus and death. In any case, narrow debts cannot offset the introduction of the number zero or opaque treaties of which no word can be deciphered.

anatomy
symmetry
tilt
expected
rust

I did not know if my desire to escape cash-and-carry was strong enough to eliminate the platitudes of gender identity or the crowds under my eyelids. I was stuck in a periodicity I supposedly share with Nature, but tired of making concessions to dogs after bones.

I offered sleeplessness
in payment of my debts
but might as well have counted
on my fingers
unlike exposure to harm
the possibilities
of keeping warm not infinite

OF THEIR PAINTINGS

1. **They paint their garments**
2. **their faces in warre**
3. color of thought to lacking object
4. **both men and women for pride**
5. closely adherent
6. applies psychology to vanishing point

poly
para
spectrum
structure
raindrop
rage
wavelength

I used iodine to paint my wound, a geometrical design interwoven with collision and conflict. Line securing or towing a boat. A motivation to swell. Or scream in the face of immediate, useless nakedness. In spite of having, without restraint, chosen the wrong role models I have female parts and cultivate outward behavior.

thinking develops
out of the negative

the vacuum abhorred
by nature
is fertile (variables
perspectives, paper money)

refinanced memory
washes white

OF SICKNESS

The Indians' misery appeares they have no *physick* other than knives in empty air, whereas statistics spread from East to West. When their tongue sticks to the palate, threatened with cessation, they enter a scar-map to sweat out their geography and civic spirit till they almost are themselves and **runne into the Brook.** To wash a different body into their lives. . .So even Christians have been constrained to refresh them. (True or false.)

nasal
velar
labial
guttural
fricative
invasive

Heavy thighs prevent the deformation of desire even while running great distances. I was determined to track down my faithless lover, all the while observing local customs, e.g. dead leaves filling up a space of vacant time. A great mass of water gathered inside my head without breaking, which made it difficult to bring forth thought.

or to say
the innermost curve
where music within music proves
absence of external antecedents
though even metal may be hampered
by fatigue
at this point
of the instep

OF DEATH AND BURIALL

He that hath death in his house blackes his face. Soot clotted with tears and gaping with vowels. **They abhorre to mention the dead by the name** sealed into their lips, the bleeding stump of their tongues. ***Sachimaûpan. He That Was Prince Here*** is wrapped in wailing, in flexion, in hands before the face, in smaller and smaller particles. Perspective unsettled by chemical methods. They bury sideways **the mat he died on, the dish he ate from,** the empty regions of his body, and sometimes hang his shadow upon the next tree which none will touch but suffer to rot.

occlude
occult
orthodox
haphazard
obsolete
irreparable

Solitude in heat. I resented my lover turning his back on me for other mournful realities. Though each crossing of space casually implicates the flesh, attraction increasing faster than distance diminishes, I found myself alone among the rubble of love. I had finally reached the center of the city. It was deserted, in ruins, as useless as my birth and as permanent a site of murder.

a hitch in time
then the world changed
then there was no memory
then life could not
be understood forward
or backward

PAUL **METCALF**

Florida Vacations

Early in the year 1528 one Panfilo de Narváez—who had a red beard, had lost one eye fighting in Mexico, and had a voice deep and resonant "as if it came from a cave"—outfitted four ships in Cuba, with four hundred men, officers and wives, and eighty horses, and set sail to explore Florida. Among his officers was the aristocratic Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, an Andalusian, who was probably born in the year of Columbus' discovery.

Desertions at Santo Domingo, and hurricane winds, plagued the voyage, but landfall was finally made, on April 12, at what is now Sarasota Bay or Tampa Bay.

Narváez, against the advice of de Vaca, determined to march inland and search for cities of gold. The ships could follow along the coast and they would meet later at Pánuco (now Tampico, Mexico), which they believed to be ten or fifteen leagues away (in reality, six hundred leagues). De Vaca eventually joined Narváez, but the wives, in their wisdom, stayed with the ships and immediately remarried, knowing that they would never see their husbands again.

Plunging inland the adventurers gave out of food, sustaining man and horse on the shoots of young palm. Crossing the Withlacoochee and Suwannee Rivers, they arrived finally at a "wide, deep, swift river (the Apalachicola). Here a man and his horse were swept into the waters; the man's body was never found, but the horse "furnished a supper for many that night."

Had the troops been able to march north, to what is now north Georgia, they might have found gold. Instead, starving, and with no sign of the ships (which had, in fact, returned to Cuba), they determined to build barges and make their way to Pánuco, which they felt was so near.

". . .none of us knew how to build ships, and we had no tools, iron, forge, oakum, pitch, or rigging. . .worse still, we had no food to sustain workers."

For food they killed a horse every third day.

"We. . .instigated the making of nails, saws, axes, and other tools we needed out of stirrups, spurs, crossbows, and other of our equipment containing iron." "We had stacks of palmettos gathered, and their husks and

fibers twisted and otherwise prepared as a substitute for oakum. A Greek, Don Teodoro, made pitch from certain pine resins." ". . .by September 20 five barges. . .caulked with palmetto oakum and tarred with pine-pitch, were finished."

"From palmetto husks, also horses' tails and manes, we braided ropes and rigging; from our shirts we made sails; and from junipers, oars." "We flayed the horses' legs, tanned the skin, and made leather water bottles."

Harassed by Indians—"They loomed big and naked and from a distance looked like giants"—and afflicted with fevers, they killed their last horse, and went on board. "When clothing and supplies were loaded, the sides of the barges remained hardly half a foot above water; and we were jammed-in too tight to move."

The flotilla was battered by storms (perhaps at the mouth of the Perdido River), and the barges became separated. Narváez was driven out to sea and never heard from again.

At the mouth of the Mississippi so powerful was the river's flow that they were able to take in fresh water without going ashore. The force drove them further out to sea.

Isolated from the others, his men dying of exposure, starvation and fever, de Vaca was driven ashore on *Malhado Island*—Island of Doom (now Galveston Island), the barge overturning in the waves. The men "crawled through the surf to some rocks."

Indians of the island appeared, "bringing an abundance of fish and of certain roots. . .mostly grubbed from the water with great labor."

But some of the Christians—to the horror of the Indians—"turned to the extremity of eating each other."

Of the fifteen who had landed, eventually only four remained: Cabeza de Vaca, one Dorantes, one Castillo, and a Moorish slave, property of Dorantes, named Estevanico, or Stephen. (It was this Stephen who acquired a mysterious influence over the natives: he quickly learned their speech, and became the spokesman for the party.)

• • •

"Three months out of every year they eat nothing but oysters and drink very bad water. Wood is scarce; mosquitos, plentiful. The houses are made of mats; their floors consist of masses of oyster shells. The natives sleep on these shells—in animal skins, those who happen to own such."

"Two or three kinds of root comprise their basic diet, and they dig for them anywhere for the distance of two or three leagues. . . .Want is so acute that these people cannot get through the year without roots which, however, make poor food and gripe the stomach."

". . .famine is so prevalent that they eat spiders and ant eggs, worms, lizards, salamanders, snakes, and poisonous vipers; also earth and wood—anything, including deer dung and other matter I omit."

"The prickly pear is the size of a hen's egg, bright red and black in color, and good-tasting. The natives live solely on it three months of the year."

"The thirst we had all the while we ate the pears, we quenched with their juice." "The juice is sweet and must-colored." "There are many kinds of prickly pear, some very good; they all seemed so to me, hunger never leaving me the leisure to discriminate."

• • •

"This Indian was squint-eyed; so were his wife and sons and another member of his household; so they were all, in a manner of speaking, semi-squinted."

• • •

"Everywhere they produce a stupor with a smoke, for which they will give whatever they possess."

• • •

"They cast away their daughters at birth; the dogs eat them. They say they do this because all the nations of the region are their enemies, with whom they war ceaselessly; and that if they were to marry off their daughters, the daughters would multiply their enemies. . ."

"We asked why they did not themselves marry these girls. They said that marrying relatives would be a disgusting thing; it was far better to kill them than to give them to either kin or foe."

• • •

"In the time I was among these people, I witnessed a diabolical practice, a man living with a eunuch. Eunuchs go partly dressed like women. . .We saw many thus mutilated."

• • •

"I have already said that we went naked through all this country; not being accustomed to going so, we shed our skins twice a year like snakes."

• • •

"I would go into the low woods by the river before sunset to prepare myself for the night. First I hollowed out a hole in the ground and threw in fuel, of which there was plenty from the fallen, dry trees in the woods. Then I built four fires around the hole in the form of a cross, and slept in this hole with my fuel supply, covering myself with bundles of the coarse grass which grows thickly in those parts. Thus I managed shelter from the cold of the night."

• • •

For eight years Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca and his companions wandered through what is now the southwest, land that the Spaniards persisted in calling Florida. Alternately hosted and harassed, fed and starved, enslaved and adored, by the native tribes, they developed over the years methods to endear themselves, to provoke respect. Employing prayers, and the sign of the cross, they came to be known as divine healers.

• • •

The castaways crossed and re-crossed the Rio Grande, and at a point near what is now El Paso they came upon a settlement of permanent houses, where the inhabitants grew squash and beans, and told them of a land further south, the Sonora valley—Land of Maize!

"In the town where the emeralds were presented to us, the people gave Dorantes over 600 opened deer hearts, which they always kept in great supply for food. So we called this place the Town of Hearts (*Pueblo de los Coranzones*)."

• • •

"In this time Castillo happened to see an Indian wearing around his neck a little sword-belt buckle with a horseshoe nail stitched to it. We took the amulet, and we asked the Indian what it was. He said it came from Heaven. But who had brought it? He and the Indians with him said that some bearded men like us had come to that river from Heaven. . .Casually we inquired what had come of those men. They had gone to sea, said the Indians. They had put their lances into the water, got into the water themselves, and finally were seen moving on top of the water into the sunset."

"We hastened through a vast territory, which we found vacant, the inhabitants having fled to the mountains in fear of Christians."

". . .I took the Negro and eleven Indians next morning to track the Christians. We went ten leagues, past three villages where they had slept.

The day after that, I overtook four of them on their horses. They were dumbfounded at the sight of me, strangely undressed and in company with Indians. They just stood staring for a long time. . ."

"'Take me to your captain,' I at last requested."

• • •

"At Compostella the Governor received us graciously and outfitted us from his wardrobe. I could not stand to wear any clothes for some time, or to sleep anywhere but on the bare floor."

• • •

Captured in West Africa, packed into slavers, they were transported across the Atlantic, arriving, perhaps by way of the West Indies, in the low country, the sea islands of South Carolina—bringing with them, virtually intact and untouched, their language and culture.

"Slave houses in South Carolina are more like African houses than in any other place in the Southeast."

"After removing the loamy topsoil, slaves probably loosened the clay subsoil with digging sticks or hoes, added water and mixed the clay with their hands and feet while standing in the pits. Then, taking moist clumps of clay from the pits, they either 'daubed,' that is, plastered, the woven wattle, or they built walls by laying lumps of clay like courses of bricks, a method common in West Africa and known as 'cob walling.'"

". . .open temporary cabins, clay walls, cribbed log walls, stick and clay chimneys. . ."

Or they built with "tabby"—a mixture of oyster shells with stones or gravel, "with an equal amount of water, forming a mass, which, when dry, becomes as hard as rock"—a method not uncommon in Morocco.

• • •

The slaves labored in a rice culture, on sprawling plantations, through fierce, endless hours. These West Africans—Malinke, Sominke, Serer, Joola, Balente, Kisi, Papel, Baga, Mende, Temme—were "conversant with numerous varieties of rice, both African and Asian, and with various methods of rice cultivation." The slaves taught their masters.

• • •

"When the boundaries of Florida and South Carolina became established, the Colonists found themselves separated by the territory now

constituting the State of Georgia, at that time mostly occupied by the Creek Indians."

"The efforts of the Carolinians to enslave the Indians, brought with them the natural and appropriate penalties. The Indians soon began to make their escape from service to the Indian country."

Little by little word spread among the black slaves, across the sea islands and salt marshes, that freedom was to be found to the south. Traveling at night, through snake-and-alligator-infested swamps, on foot and by stolen dugout canoes, small groups at first, and then larger began the trek, passing through neutral Georgia, unimpeded by the Creeks who became their allies, and arriving finally in the Spanish colony of Florida. The first of these exiles, escaping from the British colony of South Carolina, appeared in St. Augustine in 1687, thus initiating what came to be the first underground railroad.

Local authorities accepted these arrivals as free subjects of the Spanish crown, incorporating them with their own freed slaves. They were offered employment, instruction in the Catholic faith, land to till, and a settlement of their own: Santa Theresa de la Gracia Real de Mose, generally known as "Mose" or "Moosa."

By 1738 there were enough freed slaves to form a militia company, and fort Mose, a wood-and-earth fortification, was constructed. Black militia manning Fort Mose helped to repulse an incursion by James Oglethorpe of Georgia.

Spanish Florida remained a thorn in the side of the British colonials, as the slaves continued to leak from the sea island plantations. A messenger was sent by the Colonial Government of South Carolina demanding the return of the fugitives—a demand that was promptly rejected.

With the end of the Revolutionary War, the problem ceased to be colonial and became national. In 1790, under the personal supervision of President George Washington, a treaty was negotiated with the Creek Nation—and by implication, the Seminoles, who were Creek in origin. Among other things, the treaty bound the Indians to deliver up to United States forces "all citizens of the United States, white inhabitants or negroes, who are now prisoners in any part of the said nation." This was loosely interpreted to include the escaped slaves, and the Seminoles, among who the blacks lived, refused to comply.

To sweeten the treaty, and coerce the Creeks, a secret article was included whereby "the United States stipulated to pay the Creeks fifteen hundred dollars annually, in all coming time." More money was later added, to be distributed among certain chiefs.

The fractious Governor of Georgia raised an army, raided some of the Creek settlements.

Under Washington's direction, General Knox, Secretary of War, proposed that Congress appropriate money to compensate the aggrieved owners for the loss of their slaves. But Congress would not act.

"When Mr. Madison assumed the duties of President (March 4, 1809), the Exiles were quietly enjoying their freedom; each sitting under his own vine and fig-tree, without molestation or fear. Many had been born in the Seminole country, and now saw around them children and grandchildren, in the enjoyment of all the necessaries of life."

Exasperated slave interests urged the annexation of Florida. Receiving no federal support, the Executive of Georgia once again raised an army, five hundred mostly desperate men, and marched across the border. A few Seminole towns were burned, cornfields destroyed, but not a single runaway slave was taken. After more than two years the troops withdrew.

With the War of 1812, Lieut. Colonel Nichols of the British Army constructed a fort on the Apalachicola River (where Narváez and de Vaca had built their barges). It was to be manned by Indians and exiles. Pieces of heavy ordnance were mounted on its walls, and the magazine was well stored with material of war.

The war over, the U.S. Army turned its attention for the first time to the Georgia-Florida border. General Gaines, commanding on the southern frontier, wrote of the "negroes and outlaws" on the Apalachicola, and General Andrew Jackson directed Gaines to "blow up the fort, and return the stolen negroes to their rightful owners." References were made to "runaways," "outlaws," "pirates," "murderers."

"The Exiles, or their ancestors, had once been slaves. They now were cultivating the richest lands in Florida, and possessed wealth; they were occupying a strong fortress."

The Army engaged in its first slave-catching raids—and what was called the Seminole War began: "the hardest fought of all the Indian wars . . .costing thousands of lives and millions of dollars."

Ostensibly planned for the capture and removal of the Seminoles, opening Florida for white settlement, a powerful secondary purpose of the war was to capture and re-enslave the runaways.

In July 1816, General Gaines placed an army under the command of Colonel Clinch, who approached the fort, cleared away the brush, erected a battery—and began the bombardment.

The struggle was not protracted. "The cannon balls not taking effect upon the embankments of earth, they prepared their furnaces and commenced the fire of hot shot, directed at the principal magazine. This mode proved more successful. A ball, fully heated, reached the powder in the magazine. The small size of the fort, and the great number of people in it, rendered the explosion unusually fatal. Many were entirely buried in

the ruins, others were killed by falling timbers, while many bodies were torn in pieces. Limbs were separated from bodies. . ."

"Of three hundred and thirty-four souls within the fort, two hundred and seventy were instantly killed; while of the sixty who remained, only three escaped without injury."

"Those who were slightly wounded, but able to travel, were taken back with Colonel Clinch to Georgia and delivered over to men who claimed to have descended from planters who, some three or four generations previously, owned the ancestors of the prisoners. There could be no proof of identity. . .but they were delivered upon claim, taken to the interior, and sold to different planters."

• • •

"From January 1835, to August 1843, more than five hundred persons were seized and enslaved. Probably one half of them had been born free; the others had themselves escaped from slavery."

• • •

"To effect this object, forty millions of dollars were supposed to have been expended."

• • •

"Eighty thousand dollars was paid from the public treasury for the enslavement of each person. . ."

• • •

". . .and the lives of at least three white men were sacrificed to insure the enslavement of each black man."

JACKSON **MAC LOW**

The Presidents of the United States of America: 1853

Are all the Presidents whose names begin with "P" dark horses?

Franklin Pierce hooked in the Democratic nomination in 1852 on
[the 49th ballot:
not considered as a candidate until the 35th ballot,
when Virginia cast 15 votes for him,
on the 48th ballot, he received 55 votes;
then came a sudden surge in his favor:
he received 283 of the 289 votes cast on the 49th ballot,
thereby winning the nomination.

He then carried 27 of the 31 States from his former superior,
General Winfield Scott, the Whig nominee,
under whom he had served as a brigadier general in the
[Mexican War,
being with him during the march to Mexico City and its
[capture,
on September 14, 1847.

Pierce had a head on him,
he was no ox,
and maybe no one's fish.

Did he raise the palm of his hand
when he availed himself of an option provided by Article Two,
Section One,
of the Constitution,
saying,
instead of the usual "I do solemnly swear,"
"I do solemnly affirm"—

the only U.S. President who "affirmed" instead of "swearing"?

What ox goad in whose hand drove this man
to deliver his 3,319-word inaugural address
without reference to notes,
the first President to deliver his speech as an oration,
instead of reading it?

Eighty thousand fish swam to Washington to hear him,
but it started to snow during the ceremony,
so only about fifteen thousand heard the words
as they came from his mouth.

The first President born in New Hampshire
and the first President born in the nineteenth
[century,
on November 23, 1804,
Franklin Pierce's hand held his cabinet together all through
[his term,
the only President retaining the same cabinet four
[years,
without any changes, replacements, resignations,
or vacancies due to illness or death,
all seven cabinet members remaining in office
until the end of his term,
on March 3, 1857.

Look through this window at his vice-presidential running mate:
William Rufus De Vane King,
who had the oath of office administered to him in Havana,
by William L. Sharkey, United States Consul at Havana,
a procedure permitted by a special act of
[Congress
in which he had served in
[both houses,
the only Vice-President of the United States to
[do so:
as a representative from North
[Carolina

and as a senator from Alabama;
of all the Presidents and Vice-Presidents,
King was the only one
to take the oath in a foreign country,
but he died on April 18, 1853,
and because the first session of the 33rd Congress
was not held until December 5, 1853,
King never performed any of the duties of his office,
never presided over the Senate.

The head of this remarkable team
opened the Crystal Palace Exposition in New York,
on July 14, 1853,
about a month after the first stamped envelopes were
[issued
and about a month and a half
after the Elisha Kent Kane expedition
left New York for the Arctic,
on May 31, 1853.

After a patent on a sleeping car was issued to H.B. Myer,
on September 19, 1853,
Perry's treaty with Japan was ratified in the following March
by a Congress that,
on May 22, 1854,
enacted the Kansas-Nebraska Act,
permitting state option on slavery,
nullifying the Missouri Compromise.

No camel but the Gadsden Purchase treaty,
proclaimed June 30, 1854,
dragged in more border territory from
[Mexico,
followed by a natural next step,
the Ostend Manifesto,
issued that October
by the U.S. ministers to England, France, and
[Spain,
who urged the U.S.A. acquire Cuba from Spain,

by purchase or by force.

More windows opened during Franklin Pierce's term:
in 1855 came the first postal directory,
and on August 10, 1856,
Gail Borden obtained a condensed-milk patent
less than a month before U.S. Consul General Townsend
[Harris,
on September 4, 1856,
flew the American flag in Japan for the first time.

Near the end of his term
the financial panic of 1857 began,
and on February 24, 1857,
the first perforated postage stamps were used.

Let's return to 1820
when Franklin Pierce entered Bowdoin College,
in Brunswick, Maine,
where he met Nathaniel Hawthorne
and they began a lifelong friendship.

Long before Pierce became president he
began to help his fellow Democrat:
Hawthorne's stories appeared in *The Democratic*
[Review
(bound volumes were mailed to Ezra Pound's pen-pals
not for Hawthorne's stories but the speeches of
[Calhoun)
and President Polk in 1846
when Hawthorne sorely needed money
appointed him chief executive officer
of the Salem, Massachusetts, Custom-House
(see *The Scarlet Letter*'s "introductory")
and in 1853 President Pierce
gave him the American Consulship at Liverpool
opening Europe to him,
giving us *The Marble Faun* and the French and Italian
[notebooks.

Let's honor Franklin Pierce
as Hawthorne did in a preface
for being a good friend.

20 December 1975
revisions & additions: 16–18 December 1992; 27 May 1993
New York

CHARLES **REZNIKOFF**

from Testimony (1934)

Before it became the 500-page "recitative" written, I think, at least twenty years later, Charles Reznikoff's *Testimony* started out as a short (and "completed") book of prose, published in 1934 by the Objectivist Press with an introduction by Kenneth Burke. *Poetry* magazine reviewed it at the time, and found it "essentially insignificant."

Most of the book consists of short narratives distilled from 19th century law cases; some of these would appear again as poems in the second *Testimony*. Certain sections, however, such as the one that follows, suggest an entirely different direction the project could have taken, and the possibility of a genre that never existed: the "objectivist" prose poem.

—E.W.

RIVERS AND SEAS, HARBORS AND PORTS

The sloop Hamlet, heavily laden with stone—a fair wind, but light and unsteady—running down the river on the morning of a clear day, the tide young flood. The channel of the river half a mile wide, with wide flats each side of it, covered with water. The Paul Jones going up the river, the water curling white at its bow. The pilot could see the stones on the Indiana shore. Bright moonlight; the steamboat, Lamar, going up the river with the flood-tide, two tow-boats with her; the steam "checked down", for the water was shallow on the bar. When the Lamar had passed it, the captain called for headway. The channel of the river ran as close to the landing as a steamboat could go, to keep clear of some sunken flats. The bank high and shaded by trees, in the back a brick-kiln; here the river was darkest and without moonlight;

The ships: Harvest Queen, the brig Torrid Zone, Clara Clarita, Five Boys, Seaflower, Seagull, Sparkle, Black Squall, Sea Nymph, Silver Spray, the sidewheel steamer Comet, Fair American, the hermaphrodite brig Androdus, the bark Storm Bird, the steamer Golden Age, the sloop Jewess, The Gentleman, Gold Hunter, the sloop Gold Leaf, the brig Susannah, the brig Laurel, Mist, Fawn, Serpent, Sam Slick, the poleacre Jerusalem flying the Greek flag; Polly and Sally, newly coppered to light watermark and sheltered above with leather to the wales; Live Yankee, the brig Sea Horse, Polly and Kitty;

The men: Captain Proud, Captain Lorillard, Captain Percival, Mr. Appleton Oaksmith the mate, Captain Ivory, Thwing, James Fortune, John Jarvis, John Law, Job Mewster, Merry, Hugh Grimes, Heartwell, and Benjamin Chew; drinking houses and tippling shops; the women: Kitty Pad, Sally Williams, Mahala, Polly Robinson;

The ship chock and block full of bags of wheat; a cargo of yellow pine lumber, barilla, and pipes of wine; bales of lambskins and cases of manna; cases of essence of bergamot and boxes of lemons and oranges; ten tons of brimstone; a cargo of white ash, white oak, walnut and black walnut; sugar in hogsheads, tierces, barrels, and boxes; a keg of doubloons; bags of San Domingo coffee; sugar in casks, in boxes, in bags or mats; a cargo of sandalwood at the Fiji Islands and at Guam a quantity of beech de mer, betel nuts, and deer horns; ivory rings for martingales; a cargo of copper ore, shipped in Chile; sperm and whale oil, sperm candles and whalebone; pigs of copper; six seroons of indigo; pigs of lead, moys of salt, and frails of raisins; seal skins, prime fur and pup skins, from seals taken at the Falkland Islands; a cargo of tea, fresh, prime, and of the first chop, quarter chests of tea, hyson skin and congo, with the present of a shawl from the hong merchant in Canton; cases, trunks, bales, casks, kegs, and bundles;

The Chincha Islands; Savannah la mer, Jamaica; the island, a coral reef around most of it, a fine harbor, half a mile from the reef to the island, at high water the reef not out of water, but at low water the natives walking on the reef—no better harbor in the South Seas; a low sand island, but a few feet above the water, three miles or so around, without a tree or shrub on it and all about it shoals, rocks, and coral reefs—on one side stretching away for twenty-five miles; Rattlesnake Shoal, Pelican Shoals, Flapjack Reef; the ship aground all of the night, chafing and grating upon the sand, the weather dark, threatening to be worse, dark and stormy, spitting rain; the schooner under full sail with a fair wind running upon a bar of mud in Mobile Bay, thumping upon the bar heavily, the water calm but a very heavy surf;

Standing at the helm as the ship goes up the river in the evening, between daylight and candlelight, gawking at the town; a cask of wine brought alongside, slung in a lighter to be hoisted on board, the mate

himself at the tackle-fall, and then at the point of passage over the waist of the ship, which is high, the cask suddenly turning athwartships, slipping out of the slings, stoven, and the wine lost; messes of salted halibut and rice or beans, a helping of duff, coffee or tea morning and evening and a weekly allowance of spirits; jogging at the pump, pulling the ropes, going aloft;

A slight haze upon the water, the wind blowing freshly, the lake somewhat rough; clear starlight; the night clear and bright moonlight; the ship pitching and rolling heavily in the head sea, the wind driving the rain inboard and the spray from the waves beating against the bows, the ship reeling and plunging in the head sea; a clear starlight morning and the wind moderate; the night dark and hazy, the morning dark and misty, the brig sailing close-hauled, with a light breeze, just enough to move her through the water, all her sails set, going about half a mile an hour; the night dark, somewhat foggy, and ice floating in the bay; one o'clock in the morning, the moon just setting, the sky overcast, at first flying clouds, sometimes darkening the moon and sometimes leaving it bright, but, afterwards, the clouds becoming dense and heavy; a steamer passing and the yawing of the ship in the following sea and with the free wind; the wind not a breeze but enough to make the boat flank somewhat; a fair day, a whole-sail breeze blowing; the day bright and clear; the night clear and the moon shining brightly; the night the darkest ever from clouds and fog—little wind, the water smooth; the night dark and thick and the sea high, and the wind a gale; wet, dark, and thick weather, the stars to be seen from time to time, the wind from the southwest and the sea high, light drizzling rain, a dirty foggy night raining a drizzling rain the whole night; a clear cold night, the moon having set just after midnight; the wind blowing a stiff breeze from about southwest; the loud whistling of the wind through the rigging; the wind fresh from the south and the schooner beating against the wind, the night clear and starlit; the wind southwest blowing free; the night hazy, the moon at times darkened by clouds, the wind fair for Boston; squalls of wind and rain, high confused sea flooding the decks at times, hail and rain, the sea flooding the decks fore and aft; squalls taking off but still a heavy sea; heavy seas, heavy swells, causing the ship to pitch hard, ship pitching heavily, heavy head sea, causing the ship to go bows under, ship driving heavily, rolling heavily, ship going bows under, filling decks fore and aft; the weather misty and a drizzling rain, and during the afternoon the weather more and more boisterous until the wind is blowing a gale; the wind east and light, the night dark and without moon; the night dark and cloudy with a fresh wind from the southwest, showers and some mist, the sea heavy and confused, running from the northwest and from the southwest; the night dark and then a drizzling rain, the sea heavy and the ship pitching a good deal, misty, a pretty thick night, small thick rain;

The sound calm and the night starlight; the vessel anchoring in the bay about nightfall, the snow turning into rain, the wind, about midnight, coming out of the northwest and blowing heavily on shore, the weather growing cold; the ship moored in the channel, the moon shining through a slight haze, on the easterly side a high bluff jutting into the sea, to the west a low sand-spit, in front of the sand-spit the shore line of the bluff curving into a bight; bays, inlets, rivers, harbors and ports.

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MURIEL **RUKEYSER**

Four Rari by Moa Tetua

The rari, or love-chant—as my co-translator Samuel Elbert has pointed out—is now a museum-piece revived only on July 14. Until 1925, it was the popular song, the poetry, of the Marquesas; but it was fought relentlessly by the missionaries because of the "erotic symbolism of some of the words."

Rari means tie or bind, love spell. *Rari kou fau* means love spells accompanied by hibiscus batons. The vocabulary of these poems is a picture language, like those of the American Indians. The images are clear, but interchangeable. Samuel Elbert speaks of the use of "mists gathering about a mountain" for a person garlanded with lais; of the following words for "lovers": night-moths, birds, mists, mountain, wreaths; of these male images: root, comet, sun, stick, fruit-pole, trade-winds; and these female images: glittering leaf, garland of red pandanus keys, fruit, bud, flower, sea-shell conch.

The ancient chants were simple and direct: "A god constant as sunlight is her lover. . ."

"The leading poet" of the nineteenth century "was Moa Tatua." He was a blind leper who could neither read nor write; he was so popular as a composer-poet that "natives gathered illegally every night outside the laprosarium to listen" to these songs. He sings of the loves of his son, Piu, he sings stories brought to the wall by lovers and those who mourn love.

These songs are like the songs that Melville heard.

—M.R.

RARI FOR TAHIA AND PIU

The dream-image fades, with its red pandanus keys
Strung with leaves, wet in the small rain!

He is a handsome garland.
Tahia's mouth is brave, but her eyes tremble at the spring.
Desire aroused for the valley-side boy,
Bringing the gifts of a valiant husband,
A rare fan of speckled feathers
And the loin-cloth.

Come and find the fruit!
Hold your breath!
Pressed close to my lover in the mountain,
Hidden away lie children, he and I
Until the shadows of the sun climb past the mountain-top
The *kawa* leaves have risen high toward me!
Climb the high tree, break off, O Piu,
The branch of the treasure.
Swing over the precipice we call Flowers-at-the-Peak.
My garland makes my lover happy.
Lightning flashes on the mountain flowers
Like my eyes calling you
To sleep in shame at the house of songs.
For the first time, you see the ripe and lovely fruit.
I also have seen you before, while you were tabu.

When I lay down with the chief, the sun was hot,
Handsome, you came along the stream,
My chief, my love, my soul, my palm-leaf,
My shining leaf. Farewell. The cloth is wet with tears,
mucus and tears.
I am wet, swollen and wet and left alone.
You are away on the far, silent river.

RARI FOR O'OTUA

The sun climbs, hot and burning overhead
And they return, deep in me, thoughts of love.
I sail a surf-board, landing on your shore,
And my soul walks toward you, stops. I startle you.
In the night, it is good for man to be unwed,
We are locked together till dawn is on the sea.
The last day, when I have to go, we weep.
I cannot take my eyes from your tattooing.
My garlands, my potent fruit-plucking pole, go down to the shadows.
—You are the virile one, scented with oils, the lover.
Pick my flower, O'otua.
Kiss the superb wide-awake flower,
It is love burning in my heart.
Cut it. . . hurry up the path!
My hand, haphazard, crushes the whiteness of love.
My opened clothes were torn like this, and the clasps.

A TRUE CONFESSION

A true confession!
My love is gone in an earth-clinging rainbow!
She is gone! My eyes are blind with tears, mist before mountains,
The sea grows smaller, feebler,
And rain pours down indeed.
My tears flow from the prison
I dream of the after-life and of my love.
The sea of my sweetheart is at low tide,
Love in my heart.
Then dawn-clouds come, the clouds dear to the god,

Great clouds rise up, up to the source of love.
Two lovers parted, and my finished dream.
The surf rises, I am held fast, taken,
Held fast, flung away, cast out on coral reefs.
Into the depths, roar upon roar!

CAREFUL OF THE DAY

Care for love tenderly, it is deep in me.
Be careful of the day when you are old,
And old, the garlands are gone and the love-making.
Can you forget
The day we wandered into the strange cave
When we were lost?
The moon was new;
When we were parted from each other
There was only hunger.
I turn my head,
My head is in the shadow of a high-standing flower.
I know my real food.

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RACHEL BLAU **DuPLESSIS**

Copying

"And as to who will copy this palimpsest?
al poco giorno
e al gran cerchio d'ombra"
—Pound, Canto CXVI

Here is the past. I am, as you shall see, going to copy it. These lines by Pound make an allusion to a work by Dante, his Rime 78, and to anyone's adequacy of assimilating and presenting that sestina. The formal diction ("as to who") underlines the grave questions in this canto of "who" will do cultural work, who is adequate. That he uses the term "copy" says that, down at the root of the matter, at the heart, those who do this work may simply be restating. Thus there will never be difference or change in some of the fundamental relations on which culture is based, relations which fill Dante's poem and, despite its generic containment as a sestina, make it spill out, for me, in many directions.

The three lines standing as epigraph here occur in the familiar context of Pound's affirmation of coherence, splendor, light, illumination and the existence of a "paradiso" which, he recounts reluctantly, he has not formally achieved in his long poem, except perhaps by fits and starts. Examples or samples of paradise exist in and out of the work, in leadership, art, law, natural beauty, and intellectual rigor, all themselves shadowed by negative and damaging forces. (I will not speak here of his conspiracy theory about these forces nor his Manichean world view: these are now well-appreciated.) This canto is, then, a credo, riddled with confessions of adequate inadequacy. Pound challenges "you." There are not many adequate, and even in their adequacies they may, like him, become inadequate, by an over-urgent production of unsorted virtues—"a tangle of works unfinished."

Pound's riddled, riddling (in)adequacy is present in his challenge to the intellectual and physical fortitude of others: "I have brought the great ball of crystal;/ who can lift it?" with the suggestion that Pound, by bringing this crystal or transporting it, has in some way done the majority of the work, has, in effect, already lifted it. He has already accomplished the task

he proposes as next. As text. He thereby inhabits time oddly, as master and epigone, teacher and student, weight and scale, thoroughly parthenogenetic, creating his own self in his own image. The challenge "who can lift," so similar to the challenge in the epigraph "as to who will copy," suggests that the question "who" has already been displaced by the answer "Pound," a "who" who is yet at pains to conceal or obfuscate his pride in his role.[1] There are no others, no real peers: this becomes the secret statement underneath Pound's call for followers—his challenge to "you": "Can you enter the great acorn of light?" His works (mining the crystal? shaping it into a ball? bearing it in some way to the spot? finding the gigantic acorn? defining what constitutes "crystal" or "light"?) have been so critical, so formative, so magisterial that they displace the future even as he asks for compatriots. This is the problematic of modernism: that it is everywhere—past, present, and future, and one must face this fact in order to face that similarly absolutized topos "the past" which is at issue here. Pound's complicated (in)humility is also what we are seeing, the way that abject confession gets regenerated, reinvested with almost tendentious affirmation, as in the unexpected, testy remark "And I am not a demigod." As if we thought he were.

Canto CXVI begins with an allusion to "Muss." and his [one?] error, whereupon the word palimpsest first appears in apparent apposition to Mussolini's achievements: "But the record/ the palimpsest—/ a little light/ in great darkness—" "Muss." makes a mix of muse and must; the abbreviation of this name marks a tiny apology for, or apocope of a still vital commitment. And the word "palimpsest" is an enriched synonym for an accumulation of historical records through which a little light glimmers. History, as always in Pound, is treated as if it were an absolute, not fabricated by his interests, selection, judgment, and intervention. (But always made by the interests and venomous choices of various demonized controllers.) The word "palimpsest" seconds that, as if it only meant pile-up of facts, accumulation of data, necessary materials, the unselected "records"—for only the illusion of simple accumulation satisfies Pound as to his intellectual neutrality.

The word "palimpsest" occurs a second time around Dante, with the citation from the Rime becoming part of a palimpsest of golden materials which must be "copied." Pound's operable contrasting terms in this canto are "beauty" and "cohere" as opposed to "errors and wrecks." The Dante citation, as many of Pound's citations, is proposed as outshining, as the appropriate flame lit for others. A little candle against the darkness. And the famous opening line of Dante's Rime 78, the "small short day" as against the "large circle of shadow," enacts this contrast and applies it to one's short life of struggle shot through the great darkness of a universe in which we act. But most of Dante's poem is not about the existential void in which a

little light shines. These terms are mediated by the actual subject of the poem: an iconic woman, object of desire.

Pound's palimpsest over Dante hardly forgets this woman, though his local muse may well be Muss. She is displaced into Pound's allusive transposition of the Dante: "How came beauty against this blackness." And she is mentioned as "The vision of the Madonna/ above the cigar butts/ and over the portal." She is the symbol of beauty and of whatever holds degeneration at bay. A tremendous cultural responsibility has been invested by male writers in female figures. As usual. As over the crude, wanton bourgeois masculine of "cigar butts." The splitting of the male from the masculine or masculinist is everywhere in modernism. And it is also everywhere feared by the men who invoke this split. Avid heterosexual desire, avid projection of transcendent female figures occur in some measure to preempt any doubt of manhood or manliness, given the male critique of the stupid masculine (these latter words are Pound's but they might as well be Lawrence's). In any event, "palimpsest" is something to which Pound refers in the context of Dante, yet the allusion is odd. Palimpsests are not generally something TO copy unless one is in the position of an epigrapher, a paleographer, copying a palimpsest in order more carefully and thoroughly to decipher it. The term more clearly associated with a "palimpsest" is the word "erase" not the word "copy." For a palimpsest is a text which has undergone a process linking—and destroying the link of—the past to the present. A palimpsest is a text erased, but sloppily, to create some surface for, some room for another text. The past text can be read imperfectly and perhaps incompletely, under the letters of the new.[2]

The original writing is displaced, or rearranged in relation to new text by the imperfect, random erasure of the former text. But then, when one looks at a palimpsest, one can see both, as sheathes or layers, as mica-peels, as skins of writing over other interrupted voices. In the OED, the definitions of palimpsest suggest a double temporality which I've underlined. "A manuscript in which a *later* writing is written over an effaced *earlier* writing." Or "of which the *original* writing has been erased and superseded by a *later*." Or "to write anew *after* the erasure of the *original* writing." First, one can visualize the present superseding the past by the destruction of its works. Second, one can visualize the past troubling the present by the interrupted traces of its prior existence. This ambiguity also suggests a double physical presence: a palimpsest taken as a whole, as we see it, looking at both texts, may indicate richly layered accumulation and multifocal visions, of the pasts and the presents, the old things and the new. But a palimpsest taken as an action of erasure and overwriting may indicate an economic supersession of the past, the positioning of the new work

upon the disappearances of the old. What then is original? Is it the oldest or the newest? Where then is "the modern" in relation to "the past"?

It is plausible to pose the term palimpsest, with its duplicity, as Pound's generic descriptor of the Cantos as a whole: accumulation, record, layer upon layer of material that looks half-erased, overwritten with other material from a later era. The multi-voiced, tolerant, encyclopedic gesture. And as well, the substitution of his book for the books of others, a picking through so only the best is accumulated and represented, a reduction (as he says) of the bulk of materials which come over to the present from the past. The tension in any writer of celebrating and displacing the past. The tension here even by virtue of a simple discussion of the past.

(It is also plausible to pose the term scholia as a descriptor for the Cantos as a whole. Many of them are scholia written on Pound's own essays, so that the backbone of argument, opinion, affirmation, analysis, allusion is more fully articulated in those essays of which the poems are a redaction. His essays are a "past" to the Cantos' "present." I think the only effective edition of the Cantos would be the facing pages publication of poem and passages from essays. The poetry evokes beauty, allusiveness, oblique suggestiveness; the essays are fierce argumentative assertions of connections, terms, conjunctions and conjectures. The method of scholia allows Pound to write a lyric texture by displacing exposition to an elsewhere.

Or for genre, one might echo Pound on Dante, "The 'Divina Commedia' must not be considered as an epic; to compare it with epic poems is usually unprofitable. It is in a sense lyric, the tremendous lyric of the subjective Dante. . . ."; and with this promising route let out, Pound ends the paragraph "The 'Commedia' is, in fact, a great Mystery Play, or better, a cycle of mystery plays."[3] "Tremendous lyric" is one descriptor for this long poem. "Cycle of mystery plays" is another. His playing generic leapfrog is one of the more interesting parts of his accomplishment in the Cantos.)

But I didn't mean to talk so much of Pound, except that our Anglo-American cultural version of "the past" has been so thoroughly mediated by him that some indication must be made, if only to skirt him and his wares. Skirt seriously. Skirt his propositions about reduction, boiling down, his substitution of himself for all commentators, his colonization of all temporalities, the way he makes "the past" and makes it stick. (For "the past" is always a fabrication, made by interests, having specific functions.) Skirt the hidden idea of reaffirmation or copying, precisely *by* copying. Which is of course, anyway, his instruction—to "copy this palimpsest." So what I chose to do is copy. I will just take this whole thing literally. One must enter the fabrication of the past somewhere. To copy at least increases the amount of place or number of places, thus intervening in the magisterial by a kind of manic rote repetition. It does not reduce, but multiplies (in this

case by a fixed number, a generically sacred number: six). It troubles, this copying. It spoils. Despoils, even. And even without meaning to. Because it is also an homage so punctilious as to be. . . .well. I will not try to insist on any effect. The impulse was artless. It's the tracking of the impulse that surprises by its implications. The powerful pulse beam of the sestina's light and anger make it always dangerous—to be so encroached by a casual trick—this palimpsest. Or is it the poem's light and my anger?

Copyist. I am after all a female writer, one who copies or imitates. A repeated canard. Perhaps even worse: only a transcriber of documents, a typist. Someone making a fair copy of what another person has written. Reproposing my mother's role in a duplicitous allusion to her percussive silences—her clacking the keys of the old Underwood, typing and retyping my father's writing. That pastoral of production has been endlessly repeated in the recent past, the past two or three hundred years, female literacy put to interesting uses. In any event, whether any female figure was inspiration or helpmeet-copyist, the function is ancillary; the ancilla is a maidservant.

So "copy" is a word filled with gender and sexual meanings pooling around female figures. It contains obsolete meanings of plenitude, abundance, copiousness, as in cornucopia—the "multitude" of materials transferred through the "copia" to the multitude of copies that we now mean when we say "copy." This is the richness and plenitude of the mother imagined only as giving. The word "copy" contains compulsions and a lack of change. It says: to reproduce the same over and over. It contains judgments on rote imitation. Copy cat, as the kids say. This copying is the exact opposite of originality by the exact transcription of an original. Thus the word "copy" is gender-laden by its sense of slavishly imitating, unoriginal, compulsive, rote, and by its sense of all-giving. And by the sense of reproductive, pregnant, capable of producing something by submission to (almost) uncontrollable natural circumstances. (Almost: which makes of intervention in pregnancy, interruption of pregnancy a strangely "creative" if complicated act for the female. I don't mean to sound cold-blooded; it is just a thought.)

So I am making a copy of Dante's sestina, Rime 78: "Al poco giorno . . ." in translations by various hands.[4] Is it possible to copy, but not to repeat? Is it possible to repeat so assertively that the work breaks into fractals? Translation is like this, the odd experience of multiple approximations, and writing is like this too, a small observation (that purple flag irises have rust-red bud-sheathes) out of which anything follows, as one follows these worlds of observation into any number of discursive folds.

But I must stop for one moment more to note that what I will do is a potentially six-fold violation of copyright. Which is the right to reproduce

property in copy.

Genre is stored labor on a cultural scale. The sestina, Leslie Fiedler argues, stores obsession. It shows obsession by repetition. Claustrophobic, entrapping, inevitable, the six end-words of sestina come—inescapable psychic talismans. The words are locked in the stanzas; the stanzas are locked in the poem. When one escapes, one also is compelled to return. Trying to go away, one is forced back. Six times plus one the words are copied. At the very end (the "tercet") they come twice as fast as before. This poem traces thralldoms—to a woman, and to a form. There is talk of the hard heart of the lady; it is difficult to make her, melt her, fire her up. The sestina, too, is hard, difficult to make. But we hold the proof that at least the sestina could be made. The poem as form and as document represents both the frustration and the consummation; it is therefore one of the more erotic poems in our tradition.

A woman captures or enthralls a man who writes about this capture. A landscape entraps him, which is like desire entrapping him. Love locks him. He therefore wants the woman locked up, enclosed in a landscape so he can have her desire him. The syllogisms turn him deeper and deeper into one spot; it is the fantasy spot of her acquiescence or his possession.

And he does not, simply, get what he wants from the woman, only from the sestina. Obsession is never completed by satiation, but only expressed again by repetition. He is possessed; she is not. This is the reverse of the sexual fantasy: that he will possess her. But he has possessed her by writing, or in writing. The sestina locks it; the form is incredibly closural. Claustrophobic. Therefore my trick of laying out these six versions creates in its turn the likeness or similacrum of a sestina; as a test of translation, it is also true to the form. And as for my obsession? I am obsessed by the role this figuration takes in our poetry. I cannot stop talking about it.

This male story has been so refined, so modified, so articulate, so suggestive. So rich, so tender, so brilliant, so magisterial. So much "the past," as heritage, tradition, rite. The Dante is in so many ways the iconic poem of all poetry. Of all the literary past. Though this is hardly poetry's only material, somehow this poem can arguably stand for poetry itself. For the genre. For its past, or tradition. The equivalent female story? That for most of history the concept "literary tradition" has to be compelled to allow women's work to enter it. The amazing part of the history of poetry as a cultural institution is the relatively riddled existence of "a past" for female practitioners, female cultural workers. Women poets and thinkers are not really there. Are half there. Are shards, fragments, half measures. Riddles riddled with holes. It is traditionally difficult for women to write (for there are issues of education, allowabilty, class and gender). If they write, it is hard for them to be read. If being read is accomplished, it is hard for them to be readable (assimilable). If they are readable, their being remembered

is a challenge to which "culture" is not always adequate. They are composted at a higher rate than their male counterparts. They "fall through the cracks." As opposed to the presence of any more familiar past (call it William, Ezra, Phillip, whatever you will). That women writers do not inhabit "the past"? I don't mean to disacknowledge the labor of feminist critics, myself among them. But creating a past in which women exist is quite difficult and not to be taken for granted. Indeed, one might still argue that "the past" as a cultural concept is still gendered male, because within the past as given, female figures appear, not so much as agents, but as objects digested by the obsessions of others.

Such a tempting and rich cultural spot for figures of women—one would think I should have gotten used to it by now. Nonetheless it is almost impossible for myself ([one?] woman) to contemplate. What does this "nova donna" do? She is cool (to him), she wears a garland like Flora in Botticelli, she emanates light, she wears green. She transforms the landscape, the world itself. She is beauty incarnate. She is power incarnate. And she speaks? does she speak? No, she does not. He says his desire is rooted in a "stone which speaks and has senses" as a woman does. The stone may, metaphorically, speak. Not so the stony woman inside the boundary markers of his poem. How seductive and enraging at once; to assent to the metaphor, that fecund site (a stone can speak), but resist the fact (that a woman doesn't speak in the poem)—what a rocky cultural place!

Moments of the poem's greatest pressure are visible, I think, as fault lines in this sextupled set-up. Translation has some virtues, after all. At the end of stanza three, geology goes crazy. The stone tries to speak, as translators range from cement, through granite, to limestone with and without obvious fossils in a crazy earthquake of connotation. This variety of words all, of course, to try to indicate the natural power which Love has over the speaker. But am I wrong to point to the pressure escaping volcanically from the voiceless woman-stone as ideological plates collide and push?

Love, personified as a third character (the only time this character appears) "locks" the man. In response, he wants to "lock" the young woman. His desire to entrap her is mimicry, imitation—Love did it first to him! he is only copying that original gesture. If he evanescently fantasizes capture, or ravishment it is only because he was already ravished by Love itself. But the moment passes.[5] She must be willing, and she is not. The intensity of his desire, the intensity of her impossible resistance are the arc and keystone of this poem. Without mortar the stones pile on both sides, capped precisely by her resistance. The passage that speaks of this (the end of stanza 5) indicates more forcefully his desire to capture, to entrap, to have her in that magical private space (grass and hills) suggestive of their bodies—the "great hills" of his desire matching the "little hills" of his

situation and possibly her imagined body (something made coyly obvious by one translator's addition of the word "two," modifying "hills"). But of course there is no having; it would spoil every poise, theme, motif, psychological nuance. It would spoil obsession. Lose interest in the virginity of women, and certain writing topoi of past poetry evaporate. Or are seen as propaganda pieces for patriarchal families and the legitimacy of children.

Start that again—the digestive mania of the sestina form means it will devour you. But who is the you? It is the man consumed by passion, love, and desire; so moved, he cannot be moved (he is "locked by Love"). It is the stone, disappearing in grass, digested—her green eats it. It is the man so devoured that he becomes like Nebuchadnezzar—the king as cattle. Chattel. But it is a "she" who traditionally is chattel. This sestina's beauty (and horror) is that the male speaker empathizes with and identifies with the woman fleeing his desire. Why is this empathy horrible? Because it holds all the cards of colonization, and again the female figure has no "place," no "site"—she is locked forever into his. Zeitlin asks of a parallel moment of Keats's empathy of the female sexual experience by the male poet: "Is this a form of empathy or of appropriation, or is it both? And how are we to interpret the feminine as it passes through the male imagination, especially when it strives to incorporate or even imitate the feminine?" (p. 294) I cannot think of a male poet of whom this question could not be asked, who has not given evidence in his works that this question must be asked. I will only suggest that perhaps new terms must be invented, terms beyond the suggestive binary of "empathy" and "appropriation," some terms that indicate forcefully the dialectics of desire, identification and control that seem to be part of the foundational materials of poetics in its use of female figures.

What does it mean to woman culturally speaking that she must be ready (readied) to sustain the kind of worship of female figures, and maybe of historical women, that the speaker gives? She will always be nature, be in nature. He will always be art. Weaving is a trope inside the form (she weaves green in her golden hair) as well as a trope of the sestina form by its ABCDEF shifting to FAEBDC, or 123456 to 615243 (and onward): the end-words' pattern makes a rocking or a weaving. Her weaving occurs for personal adornment; his weaving is in the service of poetry. Hers is temporary, his permanent. Temporary, that is, except as he memorializes her gesture, her garland in his poetry. The asymmetries of (female) poesy to (male) poetry are once again apparent. Reaffirming this division is one of the most familiar arguments—indeed, purposes—of the lyric.

But what has driven me to distraction is the economy of speech. The claim to speak and the allowance to speech. He speaks for her. He speaks to her. He speaks about her. These female figures inside poetry have

virtually no voice. If they spoke—what would they say? If they had spoken; what would they have said? Who would have proposed their voices? This question has obsessed me to the point of blockage. One suddenly wants no poetry, or an excess of poetry, no voices, or voices more than one ever could demand. One wants no "woman" or an excess of "women"; one wants to embrace and destroy. And amn't I a woman? and what are the cultural consequences of this for me? But as for them, these representations of female figures or copies of women that appear everywhere in art: their "past" is only what we see through a kaleidoscopic wedge beautifully mirroring the texts we have. It is mainly copy after copy of the same thing, and this is called poetry or art. As for "real women," their traces are few, their words are fewer still. So I represent the past by this copying.

To the short day and the great circle of shadow
To the shortened day and to the great circle of shade
To dwindling day and the great ring of shadow
To the dim light and the large circle of shade
To small daylight and the great circle of shade
I have reached, alas, the long shadow

I have come, alas, and to the whitening of the hills,
I have come, alas! and to the whitening of the hills,
Alas, I've climbed, and whitening of the hills
I have clomb, and to the whitening of the hills,
I've come, alas, and to the blanching of the hills,
and short day of whitening hills

when the grass loses its color:
when the color is lost from the grass:
When winter takes all color from the grass—
There where we see no color in the grass.
That season when the color leaves the grass
when color is lost in the grass.

and yet my desire remains evergreen,
and my desire still does not change its green,

Yet my desire will never be less green,
Natheless my longing loses not its green,
And only my desire keeps its green,
My longing, all the same, keeps green

it is so rooted in the hard stone
it is so rooted in the hard stone
So barbed is he into the stubborn rock
It has so taken root in the hard stone
so rooted is it in the rigid stone
it is so hooked in the hard stone

which speaks and has senses like a woman.
that speaks and has sensation as if it were a lady.
Which speaks and feels as if it were a woman.
Which talks and hears as though it were a lady.
That speaks and harks as if it were a queen.
that speaks and hears like a woman.

[2] This young woman
So too this strange lady
As stiff she stands herself, this new-found woman
Utterly frozen is this youthful lady,
And just so constantly, my little queen
In that same way this new woman

stays frozen like snow in shadow;
stands there frozen, like snow in the shade:
Annealed by frost and thaw, old snow in shadow,
Even as the snow that lies within the shade;
Lies frozen fast, a snowbank in the shade,
stands as cold as snow in shadow,

for the sweet season moves her no more than stone,
for she is not moved except as a stone is
And does not move, or moves as moves rock
For she is no more moved than is the stone
And is not stirred except as is the stone
less touched than if she had been stone

the season that warms the hills
by the sweet season that warms the hills
To that sweet time which suns the naked hills
By the sweet season which makes warm the hills
By time's sweet turning that now warms the hills
by the sweet time that warms the hills

and turns them from white to green,
and turns them from white to green
And strips their winter whiteness down to green
And alters them afresh from white to green,
And changes all their whiteness into green
and brings them back from white to green,

covering them with flowers and grass.
and clothes them with flowers and grass.
That they may lie in flowers and in grass.
Covering their sides again with flowers and grass.
With blossoms and a blanketing of grass.
dressing them in flowers and grass.

[3] When she wears on her head a garland of grass
When she has on her head a garland of leaves
When to her head she lifts a crown of grass,
When on her hair she sets a crown of grass
When she is garlanded with plaited grass,
Who, when she wreathes her hair with grass,

she takes every other woman
she drives from my mind every other lady:
Our mind is dark to any other woman,
The thought has no more room for other lady;
She lures our longing from each other queen;
thinks of any other woman?

from our mind; for the curling yellow and the green
because the curling yellow mingles with the green
For there commingle yellow and crisp green.

Because she weaves the yellow with the green
So intertwined the curling gold and green,
The golden waves so mix with green

mingle so beautifully that Love comes to dwell in their shadow,
so beautifully that Love comes to stay in the shade there,
So finely, Love makes their shade his shadow,
So well that Love sits down there in the shade,—
Love loves to lounge there in its shade—
that Love himself seeks its shadow

Love who has locked me between small hills
Love who has locked me among the little hills
Love who has locked me up in two small hills
Love who has shut me in among low hills
That Love which locks me here in little hills,
that has me fixed between small hills

more tightly than cement locks stone.
more firmly than mortar locks a stone.
More tightly than a sea-shell lost in rock.
Faster than between walls of granite-stone.
More stubborn even than calcareous stone.
more strongly than cemented stone.

[4] Her beauty has more power than stone,
Her beauty has more power than a precious stone,
Strength in her beauty is stronger than in rock
She is more bright than is a precious stone;
Her beauty's magic mocks the precious stone;
More potent than a precious stone,

nor can her blows be healed by grass:
and the wound it gives cannot be healed by herbs:
And wounds it gives will find no healing grass:
The wound she gives may not be healed with grass:
Her blows are eased by no medicinal grass;
her beauty wounds, and healing grass

and I have fled over plains and hills
for I have fled over plains and over hills
So I have fled through plains and over hills
I therefore have fled o'er plains and hills
And I have fled through fens and over hills
cannot help; across plains and hills

to escape, if possible, from such a woman;
to learn to escape from such a lady;
And hoped to find the limits of this woman
For refuge from so dangerous a lady;
To find my freedom from this kind of queen;
I fled this radiant woman.

but from her light I can find no shadow
and yet from her face there is no shade,
But her enormous light disdains a shadow
But from her sunshine nothing can give shade,—
But from her light there is no sheltering shade,
From her light I found no shadow

under mountain or wall or green bough.
not of a hill, or a wall ever, or a green branch.
From knoll or wall or sheltering boughs of green.
Not any hills, nor wall, nor summer-green.
Not wall or tuffet or the leafiest green.
of mountain, wall, or living green.

[5] I once saw her clothed in green
I saw her once dressed in green
So have I seen her standing dressed in green,
A while ago, I saw her dressed in green,—
Yet there was once I watched her dressed in green,
I have seen her pass, dressed in green

and such that she would have imparted to stone
such that she would have begotten in a stone
So artificed, she would have lifted rock

So fair, she might have wakened in a stone
So winsome she might wake within a stone
and thought the sight would make a stone

the love I bear to her mere shadow;
the love that I feel for her very shadow:
Into that love in which I love her shadow—
This love which I do feel even for her shade;
That love which wracks me for her merest shade;
love, as I, even her shadow.

hence I have desired her in a fair grass field—
and so I have wished to have her in a fine meadow of grass,
Hence I have dreamed her set in meadow-grass,
And therefore, as one woos a graceful lady,
And then I dreamed her in a field of grass,
And I have walked with her on grass,

as much in love as ever a woman was—
as much in love as ever lady was,
Heart-deep in love, as deep as ever woman,
I wooed her in a field that was all grass
More fired with love than ever any queen,
speaking like a lovesick woman,

enclosed by great hills.
a meadow closed in all around with high hills.
And circled with a ring of leaning hills.
Girdled about with very lofty hills.
And sealed there by an arc of alpine hills.
enclosed within the highest hills.

[6] But surely rivers will return to the hills
But well may the rivers climb the hills
But first these streams will turn and climb their hills
Yet shall the streams turn back and climb the hills
But sooner will the rivers climb the hills
But streams will flow back to their hills

before this wet green wood
before this moist green wood
Before that standing wood, so lithe and green,
Before Love's flame in this damp wood and green
Than for my sake this sprig, too moist and green,
before this branch, sappy and green,

catches fire, as is the way of fair woman,
will ever take fire (as ladies do)
Take flame, such flame as knows so fair a woman
Burn, as it burns within a youthful lady,
Be kindled like a fair and proper queen,
catches fire (as does a woman)

for me—who would consent to sleep on stone
for me, though I would endure to sleep on stone
And that flame mine; meanwhile to couch on rock
For my sake, who would sleep away in stone
For me, who would consent to sleep on stone
from me, who would bed down on stone

all my days and go about eating grass,
all my season, and go eating grass
In every season, to give my hunger grass,
My life, or feed like beasts upon the grass,
For all my days, and pasture me on grass,
and gladly for his food crop grass

only to see where her dress casts a shadow.
so I might only see where her skirts make a shade.
And eyes cast down, to glimpse her train of shadow.
Only to see her garments cast a shade.
So I might see where her skirts cast their shade.
just to see her gown cast shadow.

[final tercet]
Wherever the hills cast darkest shadow
Whenever the hills make blackest shade,
Wherever hills rise up from darkest shadow,

How dark soe'er the hills throw out their shade
Whatever time the hills cast blackest shade,
The heavy shadow cast by hills

this young woman makes it disappear beneath a fair green,
under a lovely green the youthful lady
Behind a sleeve of green this maiden-woman
Under her summer-green the beautiful lady
Beneath a lovely green, my little queen
this woman's light can change to green

as one makes stone disappear under grass.
makes them disappear, like a stone under the grass
Obscures their darkness, like a rock in grass.
Covers it, like a stone covered in grass.
Annuls it, as a stone is drowned in grass.
as one might hide a stone in grass.

NOTES

1 Although *lifting* is a more intense task than *copying*, and there is a corresponding difference between *can lift* and *will copy* which syntactically suggests that the *copying* is the more likely future event. As so it is here.

2 Palimpsest is, incidentally, a word with much resonance in the work and psychic career of H.D., beginning at least with her novel of that name in 1926; she knew much about its psychoanalytic meanings as the magic writing tablet which was Freud's metaphor for the unconscious.

3 Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (London: J.M. Dent & Songs, Ltd., 1910), 161.

4 The first line of each unit comes from *Dante's Lyric Poetry, volume I: The Poems, Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), 163–165. This is a prose translation; I have broken it into verse. The second line of each stanza unit has been translated by Robert M. Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) and cited in Marianne Shapiro, *Hieroglyph of Time: The Petrarchan Sestina* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 92-93. The third line of each unit comes from *Dante's Rime*, trans. Patrick S. Diehl (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 172–175. The fourth line of each unit is from Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Sestina: Of the Lady Pietra Degli Scrovigni," a translation found in *Dante & His Circle*, 1899. The fifth line of each unit was translated by Leslie A. Fiedler as "To Small Daylight: The Stony Sestina of Dante Alighieri," and is found in the important essay "Dante: Green Thoughts in a Green Shade: Reflections on the Stony Sestina of Dante Alighieri," *NO! in thunder: Essays on Myth and Literature* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960). The sixth line comes from James Schuyler, "Sestina, A translation of Dante's *Al poco giornio. . .*," *Selected Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988), 15–16. My apologies to all translators for rupturing their continuities.

5 Faster than in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." See Froma I. Zeitlin, "On Ravishing Urns: Keats in His Tradition," in eds. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, *Rape and Representation* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1991): 278-302.

MICHAEL **PALMER**

Some Notes on Shelley, Poetics and the Present

> "But I beg you to take into consideration the conditions under which I am writing, the time and place."
> —Heine, *The Romantic School*

I would like to take this opportunity to look informally at Shelley in relation to contemporary poetics and to look in a sense for the "necessity of Shelley." I hope I will be able to gather up these fragments or notations of several months without pretending to mask their fragmentary character, since the Romantics themselves have taught our century the epistemological weight of the fragment, whether the sundered Orphic body and scattered limbs of Osiris or, less exaltedly, the quick thought on a scrap of paper.

As I was first beginning to reread Shelley, a quotation I had copied out from Susan Buck-Morss's *The Dialectics of Seeing* (on Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* or "Arcades Project") came repeatedly to mind. Buck-Morss draws the quotation from Benjamin's *Theses on History*. (See also Gershom Scholem's "Walter Benjamin and his Angel" in *On Walter Benjamin*, ed. Gary Smith.) It reads:

> There is a picture by Klee called "Angelus Novus." An angel is presented in it who looks as if he were about to move away from something at which he is staring. His eyes are wide open, mouth agape, wings spread. The angel of history must look like that. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears to *us*, *he* sees one single catastrophe which relentlessly piles wreckage upon wreckage, and hurls them before his feet. [. . .] The storm [from Paradise] drives him

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> irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. That which we call progress is this storm.
>
> (p. 95)

Certainly a key passage for the understanding of Benjamin's own romantic progressivism and the various contradictory threads which are responsible for the complex and compelling fabric of his social and aesthetic thought. Yet the visual meaning of this image of the Angelus Novus is anything but stable (see Scholem), as I am sure Benjamin would have acknowledged. We may just as easily interpret this figure as gazing "into the future," or at some event in the world of the present, or into some entirely nonspecific space. The expression could be one of astonishment, or incomprehension, or horror, or perhaps all three. The arms might be raised in surprise or benediction. "He" (lacking the angelic pronoun) seems suspended in a kind of cosmic dust, caught between this and some other world in weather he has never experienced. The gaze, then, is multiple and the figure, like so many crucial verbal figures in Shelley, is polysemous following Dante's sense of that word. We might even refigure him as the Angel of Poetry, whose many faces are like the multiple Shelleys which, since his death, have been imagined or posited and projected toward our time. In any case, in its uncertainty or ambiguity, its backward-forwardness, it seems an appropriate figure to preside over this talk which must look forward and back, as well as at what "now" is now, and finally into the temporal modes poetry itself envisages, such as the future-present and the future-past, to name but two.

There is no question that the future has recently undergone some major alterations. In fact, it is possible to say that The Future as once conceived by utopians and revolutionaries of various stripes has (at least for now) entered into the historical past without ever having been realized, dissipated by its own repressive and totalizing social economy (which imposed the dictatorship of an endlessly deferred future on the texture of everyday life) as well, no doubt, as by the relentlessly ambitious and adaptive force of international capital, which has been busy with the business of creating its own narratives and its own set of possible futures for immediate consumption.

It is in the light of the collapse of various malioristic futures, their implosion into an unstable present, a "now" of uncertain boundaries both cultural and political, that we are asked to reread and in some sense rediscover Shelley for contemporary poetics. Certainly such a reading will be further qualified by the fact that Shelley (as Jerome McGann has noted) is a poet of futurist

vision and address. Initially of course he is a poet of his present moment who invokes alternative social orders through an evocation of the specific injustices of the present and a highly abstract vision of future redress. He speaks to contemporary injustice at times with an almost agit-prop directness, at others with the layered symbolic language of allegory and myth. Regarding the latter, even his most "displaced" and idealized poetry has a proto-dialectical character to it (to borrow a term from Richard Terdiman); it is part of an argument that moves beyond the self and beyond aesthesis to engage with contradiction and paradox. Everywhere shadowing that future is the specter of another future from the recent past, Shelley's almost immediate past, that of the French Revolution. The self-devouring of the Revolution and the age of reaction which follows, serve both to problematize and to deepen Shelley's own progressivism. A Spinozistic sense of community and desire will become more and more integral with the vision of radical renewal as Shelley seeks alternatives to anarchic violence and revolutionary chaos. Desire itself will be seen as signifier of resistance and subversion, as well as (quoting *Epipsychidion)* "An image of some bright eternity." *Epipsychidion* is an act of defiant poetic excess, an act of resistance to the hypocritical puritanism of the time, but also to the idea of a poetry of limits. Like so much of Shelley's work, it is impossible; its suppression is preordained. The poem, in its graphic sensuality, defies the decorum of the acceptable verse of its time. There is another and more threatening insistence which conjoins in poetically coded language the personal with the social vision. An escape *from* is always an escape *toward:*

> This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed
> Thee to be lady of the solitude.—
> And I have fitted up some chambers there
> Looking toward the golden Eastern air,
> And level with the living winds which flow
> Like waves above the living waves below.—
> I have sent books and music there, and all
> Those instruments with which high spirits call
> The future from its cradle, and the past
> Out of its grave, and make the present last
> In thoughts and joys which sleep, but cannot die,
> Folded within their own eternity.
>
> *(Epipsychidion,* ll. 513-24)

A passage that, like so much of the poem, operates at many symbolic levels (along with Dante, are there echoes of Shakespeare's Prospero here as well?). The poet-alchemist asserts the power of the poetic voice to

command historical time, to resurrect the past for the present, invoke the birth of the future, and in so doing eternalize an ideal present (a present of living ideas). After the dystopic and utopian hours (I meant to type "horrors") of our age, the status of such a claim must of course be at the very least thoroughly interrogated. What, if anything, do we believe of the poetic function now? What claim can be made for the poem in the world? In what margins and at what borders, barely visible it often seems, does it continue to be heard?

Before attempting a few remarks on the above, there is one more of Shelley's "futures" to note. In rereading Richard Holmes' and Kenneth Neil Cameron's essential biographical studies, I was reminded how much of Shelley's work was left unpublished during his life, or else subject to censorship and suppression. Most of the work would only come into print in one of several futures, often a distant future, as the forces of censorship and revision (and perhaps indifference) continued to operate long after his death. The effect is obviously to remove the work from any possible influence on its time (which I need hardly suggest in any case would have been marginal). The effect is also to reduce it to purely literary-textual status, to reframe and limit both its purpose and address. It is in great measure to de-realize and acculturate it, to remove it from history to literary history. Such suppression, ironically, as the future—this century—would discover, is also the source of much of the mythic aura and mystification which come to envelope such a poet and his work.

To look at Shelley, or to look for Shelley, in the present is also to confront certain questions of the present itself for poetry, certain paradoxes and contradictions which poetry as a practice both reflects and addresses. What "now" is it, and where do we find ourselves—and lose ourselves—in it? What responses can poetry make, and to whom? Questions at least to be raised for a poetics, even if not answerable by one. Questions too which risk both banality and rhetorical inflation.

Ten years of Reaganbush, coupled with the vicious attacks by the likes of Jesse Helms and Donald Wildmon on free speech, racial, sexual and cultural difference, have been only the most visible signs of a rightward drift toward a shamelessly exploitative materialism and a know-nothingism worn with a kind of violent pride. At the same time, logically enough, the marketplace has come to seem the all-justifying means of cultural support and distribution. It is not stretching things too much to find at least a few obvious parallels with the public culture of reaction and privilege in Regency England, though clearly the means of cultural dissemination are markedly different, as are the means of control and constraint.

In poetry, as a poet committed to an exploratory prosody, an assertion of resistance to "meaning" and "expression" as givens, and a radical questioning of our means of representation, I have been struck by the quite determined recent movements to reassert order under the familiar flags of "craft," "value," "taste," "excellence," et al. The New Formalists, in systematically trivializing and demeaning the functions of poetry, in reducing form to the formulaic and prosody to a narrow compilation of Anglo-American meters, have in effect turned the poem into a tired but manageable short story in verse, content to sing, rather quietly, of middle-class life. Charles Simic has noted that their ideas of prosody sound as if they came from "Victorian schoolbooks—or perhaps cookbooks." I would say that they are in fact more like Victorian manuals of etiquette, though much less entertaining. They nest, appropriately, in the Eliotic parapets of *The New Criterion* and other neo-conservative venues. There is a nostalgia here, i.e., a pseudo-historicism, which wishes to obliterate history and return to a world where things were perfectly consistent, perfectly clear. Such a program calls for pacification of the means of representation. After years of formless workshop verse, we can sympathize with the perceived need for clearer formal values, but such a *rappel à l 'ordre* represents the refusal of significant form. Such "principles" stand as well, quite baldly, for a regressive and authoritarian cultural agenda.

Professor Helen Vendler is of course a highly respected scholar who has produced notable studies of the English Romantics and the Romantic tradition. However, with the rather nebulous *Harvard Book of Contemporary Poetry* (1985), Professor Vendler's goal seems to be to articulate a vaguely liberal, slightly eclectic, and mildly multi-cultural center. Ominously, the word "charm" appears three times in the first six lines of her introduction (juxtaposed, equally ominously, or is it frivolously, with the word "command"). Launching with the complacencies of the peignoir, the anthology offers initially a very conventional choice of deceased poets, a choice (with the barely possible exception of Robert Hayden) which would have been acceptable in any academic and normative anthology of twenty years ago. As one might expect from Professor Vendler, it is a poetry weighted heavily, if not exclusively, toward that particular naturalized self supported and at least partly generated by American neo-Freudian ego psychology and articulated in the work of the Confessional Poets. (It is a poetry that tends to oscillate between bourgeois anomie and the bourgeois sublime.) One might say that the selection from the living follows conventional cultural doctrine, a doctrine which Professor Vendler has played no small role in sustaining. There are good poets beside mediocre poets. In fact it is not so much the inclusions which define such an

anthology, but the exclusions and the willful amnesia. There is hardly a trace of those contemporaries who identify with an exploratory counter-tradition in American letters, and the barest hint indeed of those who preceded them: the Objectivists, the Black Mountain Poets, the poets of the San Francisco Renaissance, such as Spicer, Duncan and Blaser, to say nothing of the younger pots of the New York School, the Language Poets, the lineage of Stein, the actual lineage of Dickinson (such as Lorine Niedecker and Susan Howe), and of Williams, and of the Harlem Renaissance. There is no hint that there exists a wide-spread, vital experimental feminist practice. There is very little sense of interplay or exchange with the international avant-gardist movements of the century, an exchange which has been formative for so many of our more profound and innovative poets from the twenties through the eighties. Such suppression (for whatever reasons of ideology and/or marketplace) results in a domesticated map of American verse. (One cannot help but be reminded of similar efforts on the part of John Ciardi, Oscar Williams, indeed a host of other benighted authorities.) It is American poetry bowdlerized and made safe for readers of the *New Yorker*, and for the classroom, but it is not American poetry. If I seem to have strayed from the question of Shelley and the present, Shelley and contemporary poetics, I would like to suggest exactly the contrary.

For the poets of my generation, Shelley was a poet under several erasures. There was the initial prohibition of the modernists who went, or at least claimed to go, "in fear of abstraction." Shelley's difficult and audacious juxtaposing of (at his best) precise physical detail with philosophical rumination ran counter to the entire economy of modernism. His often baroque syntax seemed to lead a reader toward the "dim grey lands of peace" deplored by Pound. Then too there was the inherited Palgravian Shelley, the Shelley of a lyricism which quickly became the debased currency of entire generations of pseudo-romantic *pompiers*. To recover such a music was roughly equivalent to recovering Debussy after being inundated by five decades of Hollywood sound scores. Perhaps equally a problem was the sympathetic but one-dimensional, vatic Shelley beloved by the Beats and embraced by the counter-culture. One had the spontaneity and speed, the *enthusiasmos*, of Shelley, but his brain had been removed. This is no less sentimentalized a portrait than Palgrave's, or that of Maurois. Then too, there is the wild variation in the quality of work from a man who still, near the end of his brief life, was attempting to rhyme "twinkling" and "tinkling" with a straight face ("To Jane"). Shelley, it must be added, was a poet for whom formal perfection, the perfection of static form, was often secondary, however much certain critics of a generation

ago strained to discover occulted symmetries throughout his work, as if thereby to justify it.

Let me quote from the well-known and revealing section on Shelley in Eliot's "The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism":

> Shelley both had views about poetry and made use of poetry for expressing views. With Shelley we are struck from the beginning by the number of things poetry is expected to do: from a poet who tells us, in a note on vegetarianism, that 'the orang-outang perfectly expresses man both in the order and the number of his teeth', we shall not know what to expect. The notes to Queen Mab express, it is true, not only the views of an intelligent and enthusiastic schoolboy, but a schoolboy who knows how to write; and throughout his work, which is of no small bulk for a short life, he does not, I think, let us forget that he took his ideas seriously. The ideas of Shelley seem to me always to be the ideas of adolescence—as there is every reason they should be. And an enthusiasm for Shelley seems to me also to be an affair of adolescence: for most of us, Shelley has marked an intense period before maturity, but for how many does Shelley remain the companion of age? . . .I find his ideas repellent; and the difficulty of separating Shelley from his ideas and beliefs is still greater than with Wordsworth. And the biographical interest which Shelley has always excited makes it difficult to read the poetry without remembering the man: and the man was humorless, pedantic, self-centered, and sometimes almost a blackguard.
>
> (*Selected Prose*, p. 85)

It is a passage quite astonishing for a number of reasons, not the least its patronizing smugness and condescension. Why, one wonders, does Eliot fear a poet from whom "we shall not know what to expect"? And why must a poet be separable from his ideas? To free him for pure, ahistorical readerly delectation? To isolate him definitively and securely in aesthetic space? Dante and Milton cleansed of ideas? One wonders whether Eliot had equivalent difficulty in separating his friend Pound's poetry from his friend Pound's ideas? And are we obliged to separate Eliot's poetry from its anti-Semitism, High Church elitism and its Podsnappery? Would we then be left with Eliotic *poésie pure?* The passage is replete with unintended ironies. Eliot has generated so much recent, lurid biographical interest, that we too now must be forgiven for finding it difficult to read the work apart from the life. And of course the final description of Shelley as a self-centered,

humorless pedant matches many accounts of Eliot at certain stages of his life. What is most striking, of course, is the rage against Shelley's ideas. Which, one cannot but wonder, seemed to Eliot the worst: Shelley's feminism, his progressive egalitarianism, his ecotopic perspective, his idealism joined with an active interventionism, his atheism, his defiance of conventional amatory codes? Perhaps all of the above. Yet a good deal might be forgiven if the work would allow itself to be separated from its ideas, that is to say, acculturated and pacified. Eliot's (unconscious?) echo of pseudo-Mallarméan ideology speaks to a still insufficiently examined inheritance from late Symbolism an inheritance which saturates the atmosphere of much of Eliot's work.

In the flux of our present, with poetry everywhere acknowledged as marginalized, what we least need is a poetry of accommodation, whether that be the self-absorbed and anti-intellectual neo-romanticism of the workshop, or the exhausted so-called "middle voice" of so much infinitely replaceable and infinitely consoling magazine verse. Nor, in full retreat, will it do to revive a bogus traditionalism. Shelley, perhaps more clearly than any of the other English Romantics, represents a radical alterity, an alternative to the habitual discourses of power and mystification by which we are daily surrounded and with which we are bombarded. He represents a poetry of critique and renewal, rather than of passive representation, a poetry which risks speaking to the central human and social occasions of its time, yet speaks from a decentered and largely invisible place. It exploits the margins to speak as it will, out of difference, rather than as it is always importuned and rewarded, out of sameness. This "other voice of poetry," as Octavio Paz has noted, speaks to the present from a unique (or at least singularly focussed) relation to past and future derived from the exigencies of the art. It speaks to the present, whether a present-now or a present-to-come (or indeed one never to be) much as do poets as apparently diverse as Dickinson and Akhmatova, Mandelstam and Holan.

Shelley is certainly the most optimistic of the Romantic Poets, yet this optimism is drawn on a dark background. It acknowledges despair and loss and thereby deepens its own necessity. *Julian and Maddalo* offers a clear instance of a work in which the emotional and intellectual range is fully realized. It begins with a highly precise physical evocation of landscape, the salt marsh wastes of the Lido, before evolving characteristically into the commentary which will frame what is to follow:

> I love all waste
> And solitary places, where we taste

The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be

The passage indicates that the poem will recount an inner, psychic and intellectual voyage, even as the third line warns us against surface meanings, against appearances. As he deploys the personae of the poem, from the innocence of Byron's young daughter, to the skepticism of Julian/Shelley probed and chided by the aristocrat Maddalo/Byron, to the fragmented desperation of the Maniac, it becomes clear that Shelley is also exploring the levels, stages and voicings of poetic perception, the problematics of desire, loss and belief, and perhaps of representation itself. As in *Prometheus Unbound*, there is a drama of internal and external causes, of the psychological and the political, the oneiric and the empirical. Maddalo ("You talk Utopia") projects Shelley's increasingly clear self-questioning, the thinking-against-himself which occurs in much of the later work. After the model of Dante, Shelley claims poetry as an active mode of cognition, as no less than a means of exploration and interrogation of inner and outer worlds. Even when it expresses the most acute despair, as in the mirror called *Adonais*, the work refuses Wordsworth's apostasy and failure of nerve. Its resistance, as well as its acknowledgments, bring it forward toward our own time when the critical and epistemological authority of poetry stands in desperate need of reassertion.

• • •

As a brief coda, I would like to make mention of one other event. Months have now passed since the Gulf War, "Operation Desert Storm." Certainly it did not escape poets and concerned intellectuals that, whatever the causes and motives, a nation which designated itself as current defender of Western Civilization had been moved to assert its righteousness by massively bombing the birthplace of written language. It is precisely this kind of paradox or deep contradiction that poetry is structured to address. Yet it could not have been more evident that poetry was entirely silenced, before the fact, by the swarm of images and the cascading rhetoric, leading us once again to ask in what present we do speak, and with whom. And I am reminded one final time of the figure of Angelus Novus, Angel of History or Angel of Poetry, caught up in the rising storm of dust. It is unclear where he is directing his gaze. He wears several expressions at once.

PERCY BYSSHE **SHELLEY**

Ozymandias (first draft)

My name is Ozymandias—King of Kings

~~A pedestal in C~~
~~In the~~ ~~A p~~
~~There is~~ A pedestal is
~~There stands by Nile a lone single pedestal,~~
~~On~~ which, ~~two trunkless legs are~~
~~Near~~ crumbling stone
~~the wreck of a colossal form~~ brown
two trunkless legs of ~~marble~~ grey
~~The wrecks of a colossal image stand stand~~
Quiver thro sultry mist, ~~thr~~ beneath the sand
~~Shine thro the sultry mist~~
Half sank a shattered visage lies whom
A ~~shattered head half sunk whose gathered~~ frown
~~Beneath~~
And ~~smile &~~ wrinkled lips impatient of command
~~Betray the sculp~~
A half sunk beneath
~~Its~~ shattered head ~~is lying on~~ the sands
Whose gathered frown, & curved lips betray
~~The And on the~~
Betray some sculptors art, whos

~~Is there no peace but in where the dead who sleep~~
Cannot we rest until our life is gone ?
Not

CONTRIBUTOR **NOTES**

Recent publications by contributors to this issue include: **Ammiel Alcalay:** *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* (Minnesota). **Will Alexander:** featured in *Sulfur* 32. **Paul Blackburn:** *Selected Poems* (Persea). **Basil Bunting:** *Uncollected Poems* (Oxford). **Peter Cole:** *Rift* (Station Hill). **Yves di Manno:** translations into French of George Oppen and Pound's *Guide to Kulchur.* **Robert Duncan:** *Selected Poems* (New Directions). **Rachel Blau DuPlessis:** *Drafts* (Potes & Poets Press). **George Economou:** *Harmonies & Fits* (Point Riders Press). **Larry Eigner:** *Area Lights Heights: Writings 1954-1989* (Roof). **David Hinton:** *Selected Poems of Tu Fu* (New Directions) and *Selected Poems of T'ao Ch'ien* (Copper Canyon). **Anselm Hollo:** *Outlying Districts* and *Pick Up the House* (both Coffee House). **Robert Kelly:** *A Strange Market* (Black Sparrow). **August Kleinzahler:** *Like Cities, Like Storms* (Picador, Australia). **James Laughlin:** *Collected Poems* (Moyer Bell). **Harris Lenowitz:** co-editor with Jerome Rothenberg of *Exiled in the Word: Poems and Other Visions of the Jews from Tribal Times to Present* (Copper Canyon). **Karin Lessing:** *The Winter Dream Journals* (Shearsman). **Jackson Mac Low:** *Pieces o' Six* (Sun & Moon). **Kevin Magee:** poems in *Sulfur* 32. **Paul Metcalf:** *Where Do You Put the Horse?: Selected Essays* (Dalkey Archive). **Charles Olson:** *Selected Poems* (California). **Octavio Paz** (in English): *Essays on Mexican Art* (Harcourt Brace) and *Sunstone* (New Directions). **Jed Rasula:** *Tabula Rasula* (Station Hill). **Charles Reznikoff:** *Collected Poems* (now in one volume by Black Sparrow). **Jerome Rothenberg:** *The Lorca Variations* (New Directions). **Jacques Roubaud** (in English): *The Great Fire of London* (Dalkey Archive). **Muriel Rukeyser:** *Out of Silence: Selected Poems* (Triquarterly) and *The Muriel Rukeyser Reader* (Norton). **Hiroaki Sato:** Kotaro Takamura's *A Brief History of Imbecility* (Hawaii). **Andrew Schelling:** *Twilight Speech* (O Books) and *Moon is a Piece of Tea* (Last Generation). **J.P. Seaton:** Li Po and Tu Fu, *Bright Moon, Perching Bird* (Wesleyan). **Martha Ann Selby:** translations in *The Columbia Anthology of Indian Literature* (Columbia). **Richard Sieburth:** *A Walking Tour in Southern France: Ezra Pound Among the Troubadours* (New Directions). **Gary Snyder:** *No Nature: Selected Poems* (Pantheon). **Gustaf Sobin:** *Venus Blue*

(Little, Brown) and *Dark Mirrors* (Bloomsbury, England). **Nathaniel Tarn:** *Views from the Weaving Mountain: Selected Essays in Poetics & Anthropology* (Univ. of New Mexico). **Lawrence Venuti:** I.U. Tarchetti's *Fantastic Tales* (Mercury House). **César Vallejo** (in English): *Trilce*, translated by Clayton Eshleman (Marsilio). **Rosmarie Waldrop:** *Lawn of Excluded Middle* (Tender Buttons). **Eliot Weinberger:** *American Poetry Since 1950: Innovators & Outsiders*, an anthology from Marsilio, and Xavier Villaurrutia's *Nostalgia for Death* (Copper Canyon). **Allen S. Weiss:** *Shattered Forms: Art Brut, Phantasms, Modernism* (SUNY).

ERRATA

In *Sulfur* 32, the poems by Rachel Blau DuPlessis contained various typographical errors. The lines should read: p. 45: "which is the creature's blood"; p. 51: "Three times: the same, the same, the same again"; p. 59: "fore, at what was" and "a willy-nilly sing-song song"; p. 61: "un bon blanc, des vers" and "au fond d'un couloir gothique" and "se nichent juste au croisement" and "marging with a black shape".

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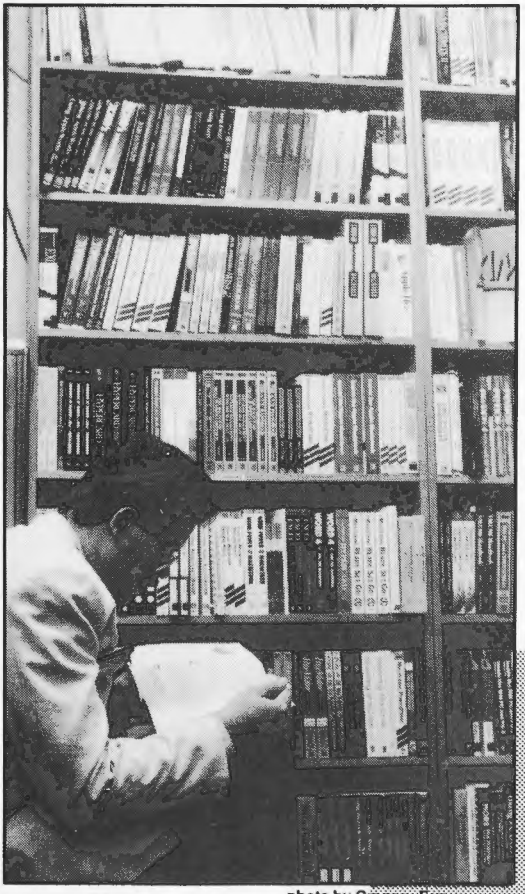

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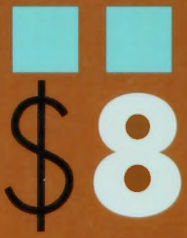
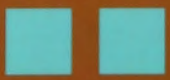
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